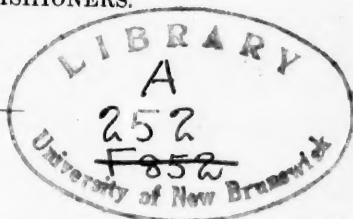


SERMONS,

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF MANY OF

HIS LATE PARISHIONERS.



BY

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JOHN, BISHOP OF FREDERICTON.

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TO
JAMES WENTWORTH BULLER, ESQ.

OF DOWNES,

These Sermons,

PREACHED CHIEFLY IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF

ST. THOMAS, EXETER,

ARE DEDICATED,

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF HIS UNSOLICITED KINDNESS,

BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

JOHN FREDERICTON.

Exeter, May, 1845.

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P R E F A C E.

THESE Sermons would never have been printed, but in compliance with the earnest request of many of my late valued Parishioners. Conscious of the defects which an unfriendly eye may detect in them, and having little time to amend such faults, I can only pray that those who read them may read, not for criticism, but for edification; and that He who makes use of the weakest instruments, may not disdain to accept and bless the seed which has been watered by my unworthy prayers.

J. F.

I

Si

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

WAITING FOR CHRIST REWARDED.

ISAIAH xxv. 9.

	PAGE
And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation	1

SERMON II.

ON PATIENCE.

St. LUKE xxi. 19.

In your patience possess ye your souls	17
--	----

SERMON III.

THE STATE OF SEPARATE SPIRITS.

St. JOHN xiii. 36.

Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou ? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now ; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards	31
--	----

SERMON IV.

FEARS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE HOLY COMMUNION.

PSALM xxvi. 6, 7.

I will wash mine hands in innocency : so will I compass
Thine altar, O Lord. That I may publish with the voice
of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works . . . 45

PAGE

SERMON V.

THE SPIRITUAL DISADVANTAGES OF RICHES.

ST. MATTHEW xix. 23—30.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you,
That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of
heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel
to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to
enter into the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard
it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can
be saved ? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them,
With men this is impossible ; but with God all things are
possible. Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Be-
hold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee ; what shall
we have therefore ? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I
say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the
regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne
of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging
the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath for-
saken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother,
or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall
receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting
life 57

SERMON VI.

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE.

ST. MATTHEW vi. 28—33.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow : they toil
not, neither do they spin : and yet I say unto you, That

CONTENTS.

ix

	PAGE
even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you	73

SERMON VII.

INFANT BAPTISM.

1 COR. vii. 14.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy 88

SERMON VIII.

TREASURE IN HEAVEN.

ST. MATTHEW vi. 21.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also 107

SERMON IX.

THE OLD TESTAMENT, ITS RELATION TO THE NEW.

ROMANS xv. 4.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning 121

SERMON X.

THE TYPES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, IN RELATION
TO THE NEW.

COLOSSIANS ii. 17.

Which are a shadow of things to come ; but the body is of Christ PAGE
137

SERMON XI.

THE PROMISES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, IN RELATION
TO THE NEW.

GAL. iii. 17.

And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect 151

SERMON XII.

THE PRECEPTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, IN THEIR
RELATION TO THE NEW.

PSALM cxix. 97—105.

O how love I Thy law ! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies : for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers : for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy word. I have not departed from Thy judgments : for Thou hast taught me. How sweet are Thy words unto my taste ! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth ! Through Thy precepts I get understanding : therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path 169

CONTENTS.

xi

SERMON XIII.

AN ADVENT SERMON.

2 TIM. iv. 1.

Who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom	PAGE 187
--	-------------

SERMON XIV.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

ISAIAH vii. 10—16.

Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David, Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings	205
--	-----

SERMON XV.

A PASSION SERMON.

HEBREWS v. 7, 8.

Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered	218
--	-----

SERMON XVI.

AN EASTER-DAY SERMON.

JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me,	PAGE
thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen,	
and yet have believed	234

SERMON XVII.

A SERMON FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM XXIV. 7—10.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory 250

SERMON XVIII.

A HARVEST SERMON.

ST. MATTHEW XIII. 39—43.

The harvest is the end of the world ; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire ; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire ; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear . 264

CONTENTS.

xiii

SERMON XIX.

THE CHARACTER OF NOAH.

GENESIS vi. 9.

Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and	PAGE
Noah walked with God	280

SERMON XX.

JAEL AND SISERA.

JUDGES v. 24—28.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be ; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk ; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer ; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down : at her feet he bowed, he fell : where he bowed, there he fell down dead. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming ? why tarry the wheels of his chariots ? 296

SERMON XXI.

AHAB'S FALL AND END.

1 KINGS xxii. 20—24.

And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead ? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Where-with ? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also : go forth and do so.

a

	PAGE
Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee. But Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, went near and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee ?	312

SERMON XXII.

JEHU.

2 KINGS x. 30, 31.

And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in Mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in Mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin 329

SERMON XXIII.

JEHOIAKIM BURNING THE ROLL.

JER. xxxvi. 21—24.

So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter-house, in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words 345

CONTENTS.

XV

SERMON XXIV.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

ACTS v. 1—4.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the Apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 363

SERMON XXV.

ON CHURCH MUSIC.

ISAIAH vi. 3.

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. 376

SERMON XXVI.

THE MINISTERIAL COMMISSION.

ST. JOHN vi. 70, 71.

Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve. 392

SERMON XXVII.

THE BLESSINGS BESTOWED ON THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

DEUT. iv. 32—34.

For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth;

and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God; there is none else beside Him. Out of heaven He made thee to hear His voice, that He might instruct thee: and upon earth He shewed thee His great fire; and thou heardest His words out of the midst of the fire 408

SERMON XXVIII.

"I BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS."

HEBREWS xii. 22—24.

But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel 424

SERMON XXIX.

THE JOY OF SUFFERING.

1 PETER iv. 12, 13.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy . . . 447

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 hing is,
 ear the
 as thou
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 and by
 od did
 it was
 He is
 ren He
 thee:
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. . . 408

TS."

of the
 nera-
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 God
 per-
 and
 ings

. . . 424

erial
 ap-
 ar-
 hall

. . . 447

SERMON I.

WAITING FOR CHRIST REWARDED.

ISAIAH XXV. 9.

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

THE first and second coming of our blessed Lord are mingled in prophecy in a very remarkable manner. There is often no perceptible point of transition from one to the other. But the prophet, who has been just speaking of the humiliation and suffering of the Son of God, or of the low, afflicted state of His Church, suddenly, as it were with a bound, darts into another subject, and introduces us to the end of all things, the coming of the Son of man in glory, and the fulfilment of all the prophecies, and of all men's expectations concerning Him.

The reason of this seems to be twofold : first,

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that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day¹." Time, whether past, present, or future, exists only in relation to our own minds. With the eternal omniscient God, time has no existence. All the events of what we call time, all things that have ever happened, or that ever will happen, all possible contingencies, are not only known, but are as present to His mind as this instant is to us. He knows not the measure of time, for He created it, and will destroy it. He sits alone in that vast measureless eternity, of which our feeble minds can form no distinct idea; and of which the utmost that we can attain unto, is to say, "IT IS."

When, therefore, God speaks by His prophets, He speaks not as man speaks. Man speaks of the coming of Christ as far distant, God speaks of it as present: and for this reason in prophecy the two events are blended together as one. They are so to the all-seeing Mind.

But, secondly, this way of delivering prophecy is, no doubt, intended to benefit us. We measure all things by our own petty notions. A year to us is a long period to look forward to. The term and limit of man's life in youth appears at a vast distance. And though as years roll on,

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 8.

and our life draws to an end, we obtain some little insight into the rapidity of time's motion, yet it is but little. We hear of the Lord's coming, though we cannot believe that it is at hand. Centuries pass away, and He comes not; and the event seems more distant than ever. But what are ten thousand years, if time itself be but a point in eternity? So that when the prophet blends the two comings of Christ—one to save, the other to judge the world—together, he speaks the exact truth. They are close together in reality. And he would lead us by this into a more correct notion of the value of time, and of the awfulness of our day of trial, and of the fearful responsibility that hangs over us, sounding in our ears, as it were, the loud and startling trumpet-call of the great day of doom, "The end of all things is at hand:" "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him:" "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment." This is to my mind, as far as it goes, a satisfactory explanation of the remarkable language in this and the 26th chapter of the book which the Church has selected for the lessons, in which you will find the two comings of Christ so completely mixed and blended together, that it is almost impossible to say when one subject ends, and another begins.

Let us not only then understand this, but act

upon it. Let us live in consciousness of our Lord's coming, and watch, as if we knew Him near. "Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." "For if that evil servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he looketh not for Him, and shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites²." In endeavouring to unfold to you the meaning and force of the text, I shall have occasion to call your attention to the following things:—

1. To the remarkable expression, "*in that day*."
2. To the Person expected; "*Lo, this is our God*."
3. To the time of waiting, and what that implies.
4. To the reward of patient and faithful expectation.—"We have waited for Him, and He will save us: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

The expression "*in that day*" is remarkable, because it so often occurs in Holy Scripture in reference to the day of judgment: it is the usual phrase to denote the coming of Christ, sometimes in the flesh, but more commonly to judgment.

Thus in the 2nd chapter of Isaiah, "the day of

² 1 Thess. v. 6. Matt. xxiv. 48—51.

the Lord of hosts;" in Joel, "the day of the Lord cometh;" in Malachi, "upon the coming of the great and terrible day;" in 1 Cor. v. "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;" in 2 Thess. "the day of the Lord will come as a thief." Sometimes it is used merely as *the day*: "The day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire;" and in Hebrews, "*the day* approaching;" and thus the destruction of Jerusalem is called "*the day* of the Lord," as on the other hand the time of its trial is called *its day*. "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day!"

The meaning of the expression seems to be an appointed time of salvation or of judgment, known only to God, limited by His good will and pleasure, and though it may seem distant, actually close at hand. Thus connecting the expression with the other words of the text, it may serve as a consolation to those who are in darkness; full of vexing thoughts, and anxious cares; tossed on the waves of a troublesome world; surrounded by men of perverse and corrupt minds, and wearied with the hardness of their hearts. O vexed souls, the day is at hand! Be patient, stablish your hearts, faint not, slumber not, be not "careful and troubled about many things." It is but a moment, and the Saviour will appear. At His coming

"crooked things shall be made straight, and rough ways smooth," darkness shall become a light before Him, and "the shadows shall flee away:" say not, "my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." Men may cover you with obloquy and shame, may misrepresent your intentions and judge unjustly, but His going forth is prepared as the morning. He will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall the righteous shine as the sun, and as the stars for ever and ever." Such seems to be the meaning of the words, "*in that day.*"

But let us consider further, how the Judge is described, "*Lo, this is our God.*" The words are the joyful cry of long-tried faith, rewarded at last with the sight of its Deliverer. How expressive of the feelings with which aged Simeon beheld the long-desired Saviour, and as he took up in his arms the Redeemer of the world, cried out with holy exultation, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!" How full of the same adoration are the words of St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" The expression there evidently supposes both the Divine and human nature of Christ. His Divine nature is evidently declared in these words, *our God*. And if we ask,

who is our God? Who but our Saviour? Who but He, of whom it is said, "*He shall save us?*" Who but He whose name was to be called Jesus, for *He shall save*: of whom it was said, "This God is our God, He shall be our guide unto death;" of whom Isaiah says, "His name shall be called *the mighty God*;" and St. Paul, "*God manifest in the flesh*;" and St. John, "This is *the true God*;" and St. John in his gospel, "The Word was God;" and St. Paul, "Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and St. Jude, "our only Lord God and Lord Jesus Christ?" To deny the divinity of Christ, is to deny a truth so plainly revealed in Scripture, that no evidence can be sufficient if this is not. It is to shake the force of all testimony, and to suppose that truth must be so revealed, as to leave no possibility of gainsaying it, which in our imperfect state is altogether impossible. And perhaps this sort of testimony which the text contains, which comes in not as a formal proof, but as supposed and taken for granted, is to an honest mind as convincing as any. But the slipperiness with which persons contrive to elude the grasp of Scripture shows the value of the Athanasian Creed. It is a masterly exhibition of the united force of Scripture

³ Isa. ix. 6. 1 Tim. iii. 16. 1 John v. 20. Tit. ii. 13. Jude 4.

testimony. Objectors say, It is hard, I cannot understand it. No ! the truth is, they understand it too well, for it leaves them no place to stand upon. They slip by the single text, and get out of the difficulty by a quibble; but they cannot evade the accumulative force of united testimonies. It is too much for them: and therefore they would have the Church well rid of it. When the Church is well rid of her Creeds, she will be soon rid of her doctrines: as they know right well, who dislike the Creed for the doctrines' sake.

But to return; the words imply the human as well as Divine nature of our blessed Lord, if we search them out a little. "Lo, this is *our God*."

Ours, by His voluntarily taking upon Himself our nature, for "He chose not the nature of angels, but He chose the seed of Abraham." Therefore, "He is not ashamed to call us brethren," inasmuch as He is partaker of our flesh and blood. *Ours* by His enduring in that nature all the extremities of cold and hunger, want and weariness, toil and fasting, contempt and insult, contradiction and railing, scorn and pain, bitter, cruel, torturing pain, and ignominious death. *Ours*, by His birth at Bethlehem, His baptism in Jordan, His temptation in the wilderness, His teaching in the Mount, His feeding the assembled thousands, His sorrowing with our sorrows, His meekly bear-

ing our load of sin, His going down to the grave for us. *Ours*, by His rising from our tomb, ascending to our Father, interceding for our salvation, communicating to us His flesh and blood, promising to come again and receive us to our home. Is not this *our God*? Immanuel, God with us. O how Divine and comfortable an expectation, how sweet the surprise of joy: "For this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us!" This brings us then to the Prophet's description of the state of mind in which we are to live till He comes. "We have *waited* for Him."

This implies three things, faith, trial, and patience. First, we cannot wait for one in whom we do not believe. Nor do we wait for that which we immediately enjoy. Neither do we wait for what we have no hope of possessing. Nor, again, do we wait for what is not worth staying for. So that all these things, the character and greatness of Him who makes the promise, the fact of our seeing it afar off, the certainty of our having it if we persevere, and the infinite worth and excellency of the blessing promised us, concur to establish our faith in waiting. He who promises is one who is as able to save as He is willing: who has all power in His hands, who knows all our wants, has experienced all our miseries,

was tempted with all our temptations, and went through fire and water, through bitter sufferings and an agonising death, that He might make the promise sure. What He offers is the heavenly Canaan, a blessing which seems afar off, but of which He gives the earnest by the gift of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. He promises us deliverance from the curse of the law and terror of God's wrath, and rest for ever, where neither sin nor sorrow can reach us, and joys which are at "God's right hand for evermore." A portion of the inheritance He vouchsafes us now. He adopts us as the family of God, seals us with His Spirit, forgives us all our sins, makes us partakers of His body and blood, and bids us wait for the remainder. And is not this worth staying for? What a hope is this! The possession of Christ as our portion, the certainty of heaven as our inheritance, the enjoyment of the blessed as our company, the eternal rest of heaven as our home. Who would not wait for such a blessing, and live in hope of such a reward? But every posture of waiting implies that we are not counting our treasures and seeking our inheritance below; but that our brightest treasure, our chief object, is above, that our "life is hid with Christ in God;" that we are loosening our hold of earthly blessings, that we may the more firmly grasp the

heavenly. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." And, 2ndly, waiting supposes trial; all history teaches us this: we are taught it by the types of the Old Testament, and the examples, precepts, and consolations of the New. The types of the Old Testament show that we must be tried. The life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was a life of trial and sojourning and wandering from place to place. The descendants of Jacob go down into Egypt, and are there evil entreated for four hundred years. The ransomed Israelites pass through the Red Sea, and wander for forty years in the wilderness, before they enter into rest. The grapes of Eshcol are seen and eaten, but it is only an earnest. There is the Jordan, a dark and foaming torrent to be crossed: there are enemies, gigantic in stature and mighty in prowess, to be overcome. And even Israel's history afterwards shows the same truth; the fiery trial of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, is a type of the Christian's difficulties and temptations. But if this be typically set forth in the Old Testament, it is actually exhibited in the New; for our Lord's blessings begin with mourning and with tears: His life was a life of bitter trial and sufferings, His precepts are such as these; "Let your loins be girded about. Take ye heed; watch

and pray. Blessed are they that mourn." The Apostolic precepts are of the same description, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, watch ye, stand fast, quit you like men, be strong." "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," "wherefore we *labour*, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him ⁴." "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." The very consolations of the blessed are of a similar kind. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown." "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." "We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it ⁵." What do all these things imply, but long and

⁴ Eph. vi. 13. 1 Cor. xvi. 13. 2 Tim. ii. 3. 2 Cor. v. 9.

⁵ Rev. ii. 10; iii. 11. Matt. x. 28. 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. 1 Cor. x. 13.

anxious waiting for that which is delayed? But the longer it is waited for, the more welcome will it be when it comes. Therefore *waiting* supposes, 3rdly, *patience*. "Be patient," says St. James, "unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh ⁶." Delays in earthly things are dangerous, because we fear that we shall lose what is deferred. Men are fickle, and human things make themselves wings and are gone from us. But God knows no variableness or shadow of turning, and therefore delays to fit us for the possession, and to increase our desires after it. He only detains us on earth, that we may be transplanted to Paradise. We must wait till we have put on our robes, till our lamps are bright, our faith is riper, and our graces more abundant, and our patience and love perfected. He keeps us waiting that we may wait on Him, as well as for Him; that we may be earnest in prayer, diligent in all the means of grace, that we may pray in private for a blessing on the ordinances in public, that we may go up to the house of God with others, and mutually reap the benefit

⁶ James v. 7, 8.

of what we have sown in secret and watered with our tears. Happy are those who can thus say, "We have waited for Him!" It is a sad and bitter thing to be waiting upon the great men of earth, suing for what perhaps is never granted, or, just as we think to grasp it, given to some one else; or when we get that which we have been tediously expecting with all the anxiety of vexed minds, at last it proves like the apples of Sodom, bitter as ashes to the taste,—empty, unprofitable, and worthless. But no man ever waited upon God and was sent empty away. "My soul," says the Psalmist, "shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches." God who made the soul alone can satisfy it; there are no wants which He cannot supply, no desires which He cannot fill: no sufferings which He cannot recompense: no labours which He cannot reward; and that reward is sure. "We have waited for Him, let us be glad and rejoice." How emphatically does this language express the joyful acclamations of those blessed souls which are wafted to the desired port by the breath of the blessed Paraclete Himself, and, set free from the noise and clamour and licentious disorder of this restless world, find themselves hastening to meet their long-expected Saviour in

the air, and amidst a countless multitude from the North and South and East and West, are called to sit down in peace at the marriage Supper of the Lamb!

We have waited for Him.—How long and dreary did the time of our expectation seem to us! How much used we to dread that momentary pain, that little cross, that small self-denial, that limited exercise of faith and patience! Those labours seemed above our strength, those provocations more than we could bear; we almost fainted under the yoke, and thought the Lord would never come. But He is come! Our eyes behold Him, our hearts go forth to meet Him, joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody, are heard amongst us. For He will save us! The elements melt, and the earth and all that is in it are destroyed, but our treasure is untouched! Our hopes survive the wreck of all things, our life is imperishable, our treasure incorruptible, and from the midst of the judgment-seat the approving welcome voice is heard, "Come, ye blessed of my Father."

Thus shall it be said in that day by some, but not by *all*; and shall we be among that number? Are we waiting for Christ? Is this our desire, our labour, our anxiety? Do we seek to please Him in all things, and by patient con-

16 WAITING FOR CHRIST REWARDED.

tinuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality?

On this Sunday in Advent I commend this subject to your thoughts, meditation, and prayers. Pray now before you go. Pray afterwards when you return home. Pray in secret during the week. Pray with your families, and for them. Pray at Church during the week. Pray always and faint not, for prayer will end in praise. Supplications on earth will be hallelujahs in heaven.

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SERMON II.

ON PATIENCE.

ST. LUKE xxi. 19.

“In your patience possess ye your souls.”

MAN, who looks on the outward appearance of things, admires most those graces which are most seen, and can be most talked of. But God, who looks on the heart, values most those graces which are hid den from the world, and which prove most clearly the life of God within the soul of man. We may admire the martyr for his courage, who are unable to estimate the value of that meek patience which is resigned to affliction, and submits to injuries, although in the sight of God the one grace may be more precious than the other. For to go on quietly and perseveringly in the path of duty, taking meekly and patiently whatever befalls us, and desiring only the approbation of God at the great day of account, requires far more grace than most men are aware of.

And it is thus that patience is learned : it was thus that St. Paul learned it : it was thus that our Lord taught it to His disciples : it is thus that we must learn it. "In your patience possess ye your souls." Consider what need the disciples had of patience. What was the doctrine which they preached to mankind ? what was the manner in which they preached it ? and what was its reception ?

What they taught was from heaven ; Christ had revealed it. It was what all mankind needed, what all men had so long been expecting ; the true balm for all wounds ; the true remedy for all evils ; peace with God, good-will amongst men, glory in the highest. This heavenly truth they taught with the utmost meekness, wisdom, and charity, without fee or reward, and were ready to lay down their lives to save others.

Yet what treatment did it meet with ? nothing but a storm of reviling and calumny, misrepresentation and obloquy ; their names cast out as evil, their lives exposed to danger, their persons scourged and buffeted, and cast out as the offscouring of the world, and this in every place, and by all parties, Jews and Gentiles alike. How provoking must it have been to hear the message from God held up to public scorn : to find all their motives misconstrued, and all their actions vilified, and themselves in jeopardy every hour, for no other reason than

that they preached the Gospel of peace, and sought the good of all mankind. So much reason was there for our Saviour's exhortation in the text. So that when we feel ourselves becoming impatient at any time, we have only to look into the New Testament, and consider the severe and cruel trials of the disciples, men of angelic holiness and purity of life, and compare their sufferings with our own, and we may be satisfied how little we have to bear. And yet in his measure it may be true of every Christian, that "in his patience he must learn to possess his soul." Let us consider, 1st, what the grace of patience is; and, 2ndly, what is the comfort of it.

It is the great glory of patience, that it is a special attribute of God. Of Him it is said, that "He is *strong* and *patient*, and is provoked every day." Indeed of all the virtues of the Lord Jesus, patience is one of the most striking. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth ¹." When He was reviled by the thief, He answered nothing; "being reviled, He reviled not again; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously ²." And it is that patient endurance of injuries, and watching over sinners for their

¹ Isaiah liii. 7.

² 1 Pet. ii. 23.

good, which characterizes His presence in His Church at this time. He bears with our innumerable provocations, in hopes that by His long-suffering He may win us to repentance, and wean us from the present evil world, and fit us for heaven.

And as He chose the most patient and enduring of all animals to bear Him into the scene of His sufferings and indignities, so the emblem of His religion, the cross, is the emblem of patient suffering, of suffering amidst indignity and scorn. Nothing in the eyes of a heathen or a Jew, so disgraceful as the cross; nothing they feared and shunned so much as the cross; nothing which the proud Roman, the polished and learned Greek, the rude and savage barbarian, despised and hated so much as the cross. All these were motives of patience, so that without it, a Christian in the earlier ages could hardly continue in the profession of a Christian for a day.

The grace of patience then may be considered:—
1st, In relation to affliction laid on us by God; or,
2nd, To the conduct of men towards us; or, 3rd,
To the long delay of our blessed Lord's coming.

1. In relation to the afflictions laid on us by God, we have need of patience. No doubt, if we could choose our own time for pain, and trouble, and distress, and could say when it should leave us, as well as when it should come upon us, we

could bear it very well. Such is the perverseness of the human heart, that whatever it lays upon itself it will bear, though it be ten times as heavy a burden as that laid upon it by God. Let God impose upon us the easiest possible yoke, let Him demand of us ever so small a portion of our time or money, and men complain of it, and chafe and fume against it, as if it were an intolerable burden; but to please their own wills, they will tax themselves to the uttermost, yea, beyond their power to bear, and will waste hours and days in restless and unprofitable toil, when in the service of God they would have grudged a few moments of time. Even so it is in affliction. It is not the affliction itself, which it is always so hard to bear, but the submission which is required; the unexpectedness of it, the disappointment to our eager hopes or long-cherished intentions, the inconvenient time, the length of its duration, the proof that we are in the hands of another who deals with us as He sees fit and best for us. And no doubt, this was one of the great difficulties on the minds of the disciples, till they learned the grace of patience. For patience has but one symbol before her eyes, the cross; and one badge, endurance; and one precept, submission; and one encouragement, hope of the "grace which is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

And yet no one can go through life and mark the ways of Providence concerning himself, and not see something in which he is mercifully exempt from the evils which trouble and perplex others. Our minds, it may be, are at ease, while theirs are anxious and distressed; or our bodily sufferings are less, or the loss has been less sudden, or the bereavement not so great, or the malady less painful; our strength is greater, or our fortune, or we have fewer about us, and so less care—something is ever thrown in by Providence to make our lot more tolerable and teach us patience; as when we are overtaken by a storm on the hill-side, even while we stand wet and cold and comfortless, we may descry the sunbeams afar off embracing the summit of some distant peak, or playing with the waves that beat upon the western shore, and we feel comforted by the thought that those kindly beams will soon revisit us, while our neighbour will in his turn feel the storm. So it is in affliction—we learn patience by considering the evils of others, and by the hope of escape. And so the Apostles, whom our Lord was addressing, sought refuge at Pella from the storm that fell on Jerusalem, and were in peace and security there.

2. But patience becomes more necessary when we are injured by men. When God afflicts us,

we must all feel it is justly done. We suffer because we deserve the suffering, though we all suffer far less than we deserve. But when we are wronged by our fellow-creatures, our pride mounts up, and we say we are injured. Then should we do well to remember the golden saying of St. Chrysostom, that no man is really injured but by himself. Wherein, says that holy father, has thy brother injured thee? in thy property? hear what the Apostle says, Why do ye not take wrong, why do ye not bear it patiently, and you will have better riches bestowed upon you? Is it in your reputation and character? By patient continuance in well-doing, put to silence the ignorance of sinful men. Has envy or calumny assailed thee? thank Him who hath given thee the grace to suffer; for if thou suffer as a Christian, Christ will be thy reward. But some one will say, I could bear it if it were true, but it is hard to bear an unjust calumny. Would you wish the calumny to be true, that you might be patient? "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God³." Every unjust reproach, every false accusation, only adds to the glory of Him who bears

³ 1 Pet. ii. 20.

it patiently, even as all the shame and indignity heaped upon the head of our Saviour was turned to His greater glory. Did the disciple betray Him? that was in fulfilment of the prophecy. Did the soldiers scourge Him? these scourges were the healing of our wounds. Did they crown Him with thorns, and put a reed in His right hand? these were the emblems of His spiritual kingdom. Did Pilate write a mocking title on the cross? that marked His kingly power by the preaching of His Gospel in all the known languages of the world. Did He hang between two thieves? one of them was translated to Paradise. Was He delivered up by the Jews to be punished by the Gentiles? it was that He might save both by His cross. Was He pierced by the rude soldier's spear, and consigned to the tomb? it was that He might fetch us from the dark prison-house, and bear us with Himself to glory, honour, and immortality. Think not then of man's injustice, but of God's mercy in permitting thee to suffer wrong, that by bearing wrong patiently you may be convinced that the sufferer will be the conqueror.

For this kind of patience is too little thought of even by sincere Christians. When we suffer pain or sickness, we know it is from God, and we submit: but when we suffer at the hands of our

fellow-creatures, we seem to lose sight of the first cause, in our sense of the injury done us by the second; it is as if man were the whole, and God did not even permit it.

But how often is this permitted for a trial of our temper, our patience, our obedience! So that if patience had her perfect work in those wrongs, we should refer all to God, and remember that if we suffer with Christ, and like Christ, we shall reign with Him in glory.

Again, we require patience in well doing as in suffering. "Let us not be weary in well doing," says St. Paul, "for in due season we shall reap if we faint not³." What a mere shadow are we pursuing, if we do good, expecting human gratitude, or thirsting for human praise! We have read the Scriptures to little purpose if we depend on either one or the other. Gratitude will fail us where we have most right to expect it, and praise will be denied us where we most deserve it. He only will be crowned at last who goes on patiently doing his great Master's work, desirous of that Master's love and approbation, daily and hourly setting before his eyes the time when God shall bring every work to judgment, and punish the wrong doer. But we must expect severe trials

³ Gal. vi. 9.

in well doing; the coldness of some, the deceitfulness of others, the difficulty of accomplishing any great end from the opposition which will always be made to it by the selfishness and vanity of the world, render the struggle always arduous, and at times terrible. And none will be found to go through that struggle but such as setting their Master before them, as "the Apostle and High Priest of their profession," like Him endure the cross and despise the shame, and hazard every thing rather than surrender a principle or betray a solemn trust. In all these things the great motive to patience is that which the whole of the chapter sets before us, and on which our Lord more especially dwells in the last verses of it. "Take heed unto yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." And so St. James, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth

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nigh." "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy⁴." For how well may we be patient when we remember that the great Judge Himself, who is provoked every day, and could in a moment usher in the great day of judgment, patiently waits for the repentance of sinners, and strives with them so many years!

If we ourselves will call to mind how often we have tried that patience, how often we ourselves might have been cut off, how often, but for infinite long-suffering, "our sins have cried to heaven against us, and our iniquities called for vengeance on us," and still the Judge lingers, and gives us "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," we shall surely find it more easy to be patient with our brethren. In the latter days, when the early prophecies of our Lord are fulfilling again, "when there are five in one house divided, three against two and two against three, when the father in law is against the mother in law, and the mother in law against her

⁴ James v. 7, 8, 10, 11.

⁵ Acts iii. 19.

daughter in law⁶;" when "the hearts of men are once more failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, because the powers of the heavens are shaken⁷," we should feel more strongly than ever the necessity of patience, for it was in the prospect of such times that our Lord said, "in your patience possess ye your souls⁸." Patient we should be even with the ungodly world around us, lest by any unkind or unchristian words we give a handle to wicked men to speak reproachfully against religion and revile our Master; patient we should be with sinners, praying for them, striving with them "with all long-suffering and doctrine," "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Patient we should be still more with our brethren in the same Church, united in the same bond of love. If all do not see the same truths, or in the same manner, let us not rashly accuse or intemperately find fault with each other; scornful taunts and threatening language ill become brethren in Christ. Let us believe the best we may of each other. The clergy must bear with the laity in some things, knowing that they have but little time and leisure for religious

⁶ Luke xii. 52.⁷ Luke xxi. 21.⁸ Luke xxi. 19.

studies, and cannot be expected to know what it must be confessed they have been so little instructed in. And the laity may well bear with the clergy in other things, and believe that if they desire to revive what has been very generally neglected, it is after all from a sincere desire for their good and the welfare of the Church, from a readiness to obedience, and an honest intention to fulfil those solemn vows which they have publicly and repeatedly made. Patience with each other, abstaining from mutual recrimination, and needless distrust and jealousy, will surely do much towards a good understanding; and the interest of all will be promoted if all agree to obey what all acknowledge to be in the main a sound, scriptural, and pure standard of devotion. For patience is the sister of obedience, and without obedience patience cannot exist.

And observe the blessed fruit of patience. It is the "possession of the soul:" that quietness and serenity of mind which seems to keep the soul whole and entire, and does not suffer it to be distracted with diverse opinions, or torn with contending passions; that perception and thoughtful enjoyment of all that is really good, which mitigates every evil where it cannot wholly remove it; that constant ability to do good, which the impatient and unthankful never possess, who mar

every thing they intend to do by their impetuosity in doing it, and never succeed because they will not wait God's time; that thoughtful, cheerful, elevated piety, which makes the most of every blessing, and the least of every evil, which has learned the secret of contentment in devotion to the work of God, in absolute resignation to His will, in humble hope of His mercy.

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SERMON III.

THE STATE OF SEPARATE SPIRITS.

ST. JOHN xiii. 36.

"Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou ? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now ; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards."

AMONG the various points of peculiar interest which belong to the Gospel of St. John, must be reckoned the few but expressive references to the future lives and deaths of the Apostles.

Thus in the last chapter we have a remarkable hint of the crucifixion of St. Peter given by our Saviour in the words, "When thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not¹." "This," adds the evangelist, "He spake, signifying by what kind of death he should glorify God." Church history enables us to follow up the hint, and supplies us with the information

¹ John xxi. 18.

that St. Peter, out of his great humility, refused to suffer in the same posture with his Lord, but begged to be allowed to suffer with his head downwards, as unworthy even of the posture of the Cross of Christ.

It is possible that some hint of the same kind may be intended here; "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me hereafter." The cross which I am now about to endure is too hard for thee in thy present state of self-confident weakness; thou thinkest that thou canst endure all crosses for My sake, but thy faith is weak. I must suffer for thee, to enable thee to suffer after Me; and then thou shalt read in My sufferings a type and example of thine own. This meaning seems not unlikely to be intended. At the same time it is evidently not the whole, nor perhaps the principal sense of the text. For looking back to ver. 33, we find our Lord saying, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you . . . Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." Now on turning back to the passages in chap. viii. 21, and vii. 33, in which, on two occasions, our Lord is said to have spoken thus to the Jews, we find an express reference to His going out of the world to the Father. Jesus said unto

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This, then, would show that the principal meaning of our Lord's saying to St. Peter is,—I am now going to the kingdom and glory of My Father in Paradise; thither thou canst not follow Me now, but when thy appointed time comes, thou, like Myself, shalt pass through the bitter sufferings of the Cross, to be with Me where I am, and to be numbered with My saints in glory everlasting.

Again, it is remarkable that our Lord should say, "As I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you." Because He had said to the Jews, "Ye shall die in your sins, whither I go ye cannot come;" which was obviously inapplicable to the disciples. But the whole force lies in the word *now*. So *now* I

say to you. For the present you, like the Jews, are not permitted to come whither I go: but there shall soon be a separation between you: you shall follow Me afterwards, the veil of the flesh shall be rent; and while they that would not believe on Me shall die in their sins, ye, My faithful disciples, shall be with Me where I am, and never be separated from Me any more. In this world there is a union in the flesh between believers and unbelievers, but there shall soon be a separation: the union is for a moment, the separation will be eternal. In this world there is a separation between the Redeemer and His people; but there shall soon be a re-union: the separation was for a moment, the union will last world without end. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer²." And again, "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chamber" (the dark and silent chamber of the grave) "and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity³." Why

² Isa. liv. 8.

³ Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

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then was it necessary that St. Peter should not follow our Lord *now*? “Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now.” The Apostle indeed was of another mind: “Lord,” answered he, “why cannot I follow Thee now?” The subsequent history contains a sufficient answer to the question.

I. For his own sake it was better that he should not follow Christ now. His faith was weak, temptation was strong, his own mind inexperienced, ardent, self-confident, ill-grounded in the truth, was not yet fitted to bear that exceeding weight of glory which his blessed Master had in store for him. The Service for the Visitation of the Sick, in our Prayer-book, seems to embody the thought which I am suggesting. “There should be no greater comfort to Christian persons than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, troubles, and sicknesses. For He Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain: He entered not into His glory before He was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ, that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life.” And how thoroughly this purifying effect of sanctified affliction wrought on St. Peter’s own mind, may be gathered both from the Acts

of the Apostles,—where we find him with all his natural ardour, but supported by a stronger, riper faith,—and from his own Epistles, which are full of the blessings of suffering. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations⁴.” And again, “For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps⁵.” “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings⁶.” And in chap. ii. “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.” So manifest afterwards was the reason why St. Peter should not follow his Lord now.

II. For the cause of the Gospel it was necessary. That testimony which he bore to the cause of truth would never have reached us but through the subsequent life and labours and trials of the Apostle. We should have heard of his fall, but not of the abundant evidence of his repentance. And he who was peculiarly fitted to be the Apostle of the Jews, would not

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 6.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

⁶ 1 Pet. iii. 14.

have been enabled to speak to three thousand at one time, who became obedient to the faith.

III. For the increase and abundance of his own eternal reward it was necessary. For they were Christ's own words, "Ye which have followed Me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel⁷." And again, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel⁸." "And behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be⁹." Thus did St. Peter, in a subordinate sense, follow our Lord here upon earth; and from earth he speedily passed to Paradise, to be with our Saviour till the morning of the resurrection.

That this is the meaning of the words before us, I have already, I think, shown, by comparing them with the context; but with a view to establish a truth on which so much of our comfort, as Christians, depends, it may be useful to compare them also with other passages of Holy Scripture.

⁷ Matt. xix. 28.

⁸ Luke xxii. 29.

⁹ Rev. xxii. 12.

An error has risen and spread among us, more widely it is to be feared than sincere believers might expect, an error which falls in with notions of the false material philosophy of the day, that the soul, like the body, continues in a state of sleep after death, and remains unconscious till the morning of the resurrection. I have no doubt whatever, that this notion is one of those poisonous roots of infidelity which occasionally are found even in the minds of pious and sober-minded people. It well suits indeed those who live for this world as if it were the only world; who are glad to put the next world out of mind, because it is out of sight; who have no solemn associations or inspiring thoughts connected with the world of spirits; who are glad to forget the dead as soon as they are gone, that they may, with the more untiring eagerness, betake themselves to the pursuit of their one, their only treasure; it well suits such to deny the existence of the Communion of Saints. But that real, practical, pious Christians should do so is indeed a matter of astonishment, nor could they allow themselves in an error at once so noxious, miserable, and selfish, did they know that the whole voice of the ancient Church is unquestionably against them; that the Jewish Church was altogether of another mind; that the great doctors and divines of our own branch, Beveridge and Hall,

Andrewes and Laud, Hooker and Taylor and Pearson, are all against them ; and that, above all, Holy Scripture itself in many passages speaks a language altogether different, and uses terms which would be wholly and entirely inapplicable, if the saints departed were not alive, and conscious of existence. Indeed, so strong is the belief of the Church on the point, that it is perfectly marvellous it should ever have been missed. What are the words in the *Te Deum*? "The glorious company of the Apostles, praise Thee. The goodly fellowship of the Prophets, praise Thee. The noble army of Martyrs, praise Thee." How can this glorious company praise God if they be all asleep, and unconscious of the existence both of God and of themselves? Is this the kind of praise which we mean, the praise of mute stones, dumb beasts, or senseless stocks? Away with such gross fallacies, such idle perversion of plain words. If they praise God, and praise Him with the angels, they must be living and conscious and intelligent.

But to return to the Scriptures. The first passage I shall mention is that remarkable passage in St. Matthew (xxii. 32), where our Saviour confutes the unbelieving Sadducees. He there argues for the truth of the resurrection, from the fact that Moses called God "the God of Abraham,

the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Now says our Lord, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" and our Lord adds these words as His own inference. So that our Saviour's argument is not that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, are dead, but that Moses says they shall rise again: but it is this; when Moses calls on God as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, it shows that they must be living persons, for it is not their death on which our Saviour dwells as the proof of the resurrection, but their living in another state. Their present existence shows that one day their bodies will be raised. A stronger proof I cannot conceive of the truth of the doctrine of a state of separate spirits. But to the doctrine we add evidence of fact. For Moses, who thus spoke of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, appeared alive with Elijah at the transfiguration of our Saviour, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem¹.

The words of our Lord in St. John xvii. are of a similar kind. We read in His prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world;"

¹ Luke ix. 31.

and in xii. 26, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." If we ask for an explanation of this language, and inquire, where shall also our Lord's servant be? we have an answer in the words of our Lord to the penitent thief; "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Now paradise cannot be the region of lost spirits; nor can it be heaven, properly so called, viz. the state of the blessed after the day of judgment. It must therefore be the place of departed spirits, as is still more plainly shown in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

But it may be said, the case of the dying thief was an extraordinary one, and is therefore not to be relied on. To this I answer first, that no evidence appears that, though extraordinary, it was not intended as a pattern; for otherwise, what becomes of all the comfort which we derive from the language of the Apostles? If because their faith was greater than ours, we may not take comfort from their language, we may as well shut up the New Testament at once, and bid farewell to the hopes and joys of the blessed. But as this is too absurd to need refutation, let us turn to St. Paul. "Having a desire to depart and *to be with Christ.*" To be with Christ! Is it a state of slumber, O blessed Paul, that thou dost bid us think of and hope for, after thy example? Was this the

Apostle's great and earnest longing and desire, that he might be unconscious? According to this reasoning, it were much better for him to have been in the flesh, for there he would have both been doing his Master service, and conscious of his Master's presence. To such absurdities are we driven when we deny the plain statements of the Holy Scriptures.

Turn again to 2 Cor. v. 8, where you will find him applying the same language to all sincere Christians. "Therefore we are always confident; knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Now this is perfectly conclusive as to the point in hand. His argument is, we are so perfectly sure of the ground on which we stand, that if we are sincere Christians, we believe that as soon as we quit the body we are with the Lord. Now it is impossible to apply the words to the resurrection of the body, because he expressly says, *absent from the body*; and the word rendered *absent* means a sojourning; so that it can be applicable to the soul only; and how we are to rejoice and be comforted because our souls are to be with Christ in a state of sleep, unconscious whether we live or no, is, I confess, past my comprehension.

But to pass on to the Revelation of St. John. Without entering into mysteries too deep for us, one fact, I think, must be admitted, that the description given of saints and angels in glory, is not a description of any thing that takes place on earth. And if not on earth, it is not of the state after the resurrection; for the persons who are described in chapters iv. v. vii. and elsewhere, are spoken of as longing for the great event to take place, the great battle to be ended, the great woes to be past, the kingdom of Christ to come, the oppression and sin of the world to be done away; and the joy at the close of the book is, that death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. Now the conclusion that this is meant of a state of separate spirits is entirely independent of any interpretation of the prophecies; and is, I think, the only inference that can fairly be drawn from the tenor of the book. Put, then, all these testimonies together, and sum up the accumulative force of the whole, the words of our Lord to St. Peter, His reproof of the Sadducees, His answer to the penitent thief, the assurances of the Old Testament, and the expressions in the Revelation, and you will find abundant reason for holding fast to what the consentient testimony of the Church has handed down to us as part and parcel of our faith—"I believe in the Com-

44 THE STATE OF SEPARATE SPIRITS.

munion of Saints," *i. e.* of believers in the body, bound by holy brotherhood on earth; of believers out of the body, bound by the same holy ties in Paradise.

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SERMON IV.

FEARS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE HOLY COMMUNION.

PSALM xxvi. 6, 7.

"I will wash mine hands in innocency : so will I compass
Thine altar, O Lord : That I may publish with the voice of
thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works."

TIMID but conscientious persons often feel distressed lest they should come unworthily to the Holy Communion, and so increase their condemnation. And perhaps when they see others less scrupulous and less conscientious coming without any fears at all, partaking of the Holy Supper apparently without reverence and devotion, and living a life of careless unconcern about their souls, their minds are the more disquieted. They should recollect, however, that the strictest discipline would not altogether exclude unworthy communicants, provided they did not live in open sin ; and that they as individuals have nothing to do with the

evil conduct of others, except by way of charity to warn, pity, and pray for them. But the abuse of the Holy Sacrament on the part of their brethren must not deter them from its right and careful use; and it should be their endeavour to get their fears and their scruples quieted, and their minds assured by the benefit of communicating, that all doubtfulness being done away, they may with a safe and quiet conscience partake of the body and blood of the Lord. To such persons a few remarks may this morning be profitably, under God's blessing, addressed.

In the first place, then, it may be very safely laid down, that though a state of fear is better than living in careless security, it is not a satisfactory state. "There is no fear in love," says the Apostle St. John; "for perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love¹." He who feareth may love, but is not made perfect in that grace. His apprehensions render him uneasy and distrustful; he is occupied more with thinking on himself than of the mercy of his Saviour, and finds himself doubting, when he should be saying, "O my God, thou art good! O my soul, thou art happy!"

From what, then, do such scruples arise, and

¹ 1 John iv. 18.

what remedies may be suggested for them? It has been very properly remarked by Mr. Kettlewell, in his admirable discourse on the Lord's Supper, that if Christians thought as much of the danger of *sinful abstaining* as they do of *unworthily communicating*, they would more diligently set themselves to remove the hindrances that lie in their way. For as the same judicious divine observes, there is no more cause of complaint against the difficulty of communicating rightly, than against all religion. The same duties required of us to worthy receiving, are required to make any of us a good Christian: nay, to a worthy prayer, promise, or thanksgiving. So that if a man will not come to the Sacrament because he is deficient, and has not all those virtues required of a worthy communicant, he must on the same principle abstain from prayers and praises, and all duties of religion, whether public or private. For unless he perform them in a right spirit he cannot perform them worthily, and therefore being unfit for the Holy Sacrament, he is unfit for every thing else. Thus, when the Psalmist says in the text, "I will wash mine hands in innocency, and so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord," he must be understood to mean that integrity and sincerity of heart and conduct which is the best preparation for every duty, and not

merely for the Holy Communion; that habitual preparation which is best manifested by a holy life, as well as that actual preparation which consists in acts of self-examination, calling to mind our past sins, sorrow for them, prayer for forgiveness, and meditation on the sufferings and love of Christ our Saviour.

There are, however, two causes which seem to me to lie at the root of many of these fears and scruples. The first is the notion which is supported and fostered by low views of Sacramental grace, that certain intense and rapturous feelings are *required* of us, in order to our receiving any benefit from the *Holy Communion*. Now undoubtedly, if we think of receiving the Communion as we ought, if we come to receive the Lord's body, we cannot feel too deeply and reverently, our prayers cannot be too fervent nor our affections too lively: but this is very different from excessive transports of emotion, and over-wrought and excited feeling, which is not required of any one, not desirable in all, and only tolerable in any where it corresponds to the general disposition of the receiver; and even in such a case a calm and serene aspect, a composed and orderly frame of mind, a holy and sacred reserve, seem more lowly, more reverent, more becoming the unworthiness of a creature entering the immediate pre-

sence of its Creator, than any excessive outburst of feeling. At the courts of earthly sovereigns it is not permitted, much less expected, that we should rush forward, and with loud and tumultuous expression of loyalty embrace our sovereign's feet; quietness, order, and decorum, established usages, and lowly prostration are required. But the error of supposing that certain feelings experienced by others are required of us, and that their emotions are the measure and standard of our own, is very common, and must be traced to that further error, that *feeling*, not *action*, is the test of the life of God in the soul of man. It would be easy to show that this tends to great self-deception. Feeling seems to partake of bodily, at all events of animal power. Our state of health, our natural dispositions, circumstances of worldly pleasure or pain, all contribute in a greater or less degree to feelings of a pleasurable or sorrowful kind, but surely these are not to be the measure of the benefit we are to receive, nor are they the true preparation for it.

I am not now contending, let it be observed, for the absence of feeling in matters of religion. God forbid I should! Religion demands our very deepest and most intense feelings. We cannot feel too deeply, too fervently, too intensely on religious matters in general, more especially on

the love of our blessed Lord, in giving us Himself to feed upon: but then this feeling should not be made a matter of display. It should spring up calmly and freely within our own minds, and display itself by action. If it sees others observe it, it should rather hide itself from the gaze of the world, and be most lively when alone and in the presence of its God. In short, the deeper and more real our feeling is, of any kind, the more will this be the case. The depth and reality of it will make itself felt by action, not by mere sentiment. Those who feel most deeply, whether in sorrow or joy, generally say least: while others are in ecstasies or bursting with grief, they are silent: but their feeling goes on, its reality makes them not anxious to be seen to feel. They feel by action, if one may so speak. Now whoever of us has treasured up our blessed Lord's sayings, will remember, that such is the purport of many of them. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them²." "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you³." "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never

² John xiii. 17.

³ John xv. 14.

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knew you : depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock : and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock⁴ : " If any man serve Me, let him follow Me⁵." And so His Apostle says : " He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. Let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in deed, and in truth⁶." " Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city⁷." Thus we see that the Scripture speaks not of feeling, but of doing : when we do what is right, we may be thankful if we feel comfort ; but the feeling comfort is no satisfaction without doing right ; it is, on the contrary, a delusion.

So that if you would gain real comfort, you must seek it by continuance in well-doing, without looking for comfort ; leaving it to Him who is the Comforter to impart it to you in what measure and after what manner He sees fit. But above all things, avoid endeavouring to make yourselves comfortable by imitation of the feelings of others.

⁴ Matt. vii. 22—25.

⁶ 1 John iii. 7. 18.

⁵ John xii. 26.

⁷ Rev. xxii. 14.

For imitations of feeling, like imitations of wood or stone, generally speaking, serve no other purpose than to hide what is defective, to give support where it is not wanted, and to display the bad taste of those who use them.

Another cause of men's doubts and scruples about the Holy Communion is an expectation which they form of some present, and as it were visible, benefit from communicating. They expect this comfort to shed itself visibly over the affections and emotions of their souls.

Now undoubtedly here I would not say any thing to discourage the assurance that we shall find comfort, but we are not to be too anxious about it. We are not to suppose that we find no benefit if it be withheld from us. The very fact of our having done as was commanded us, the wish to communicate rightly, the endeavour to act up to our conviction, ought to be a comfort to us, and will tend to keep us from falling into temptation; and if this be the only benefit, it is a great one. We are so prone to fall, that to be kept steadily in our course is of itself a great thing; although we must not be satisfied with this; we must advance, that "our path may shine more and more unto the perfect day^s."

^s Prov. iv. 18.

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But we should remember, that if the Holy Communion be a visible sign of invisible grace, inasmuch as that grace is invisible, we must not expect its immediate effects to be visible. It descends certainly as the dew, but silently. It comes not as the earthquake, or the fire, or the tempest, but as a still small voice⁹. Divine grace will make itself felt, but it will be by action. He who diligently and continually seeks it, will find himself able to do more for God, to surmount temptations, to deny himself for works of charity, prayer in secret will become habitual to him, and not irksome, the Holy Sacrament itself will seem increasingly necessary; he may not always be equally comforted, but he will never like to be absent, till at last he will find that he cannot go without it. It will be as much the food of his soul as bread is the support of his body.

I would recommend you then to attend to the following suggestions:—

1. To be present at the Lord's table whenever it is possible. To neglect any duty, at any time, when the performance of it is practicable, is a poor way of obtaining that comfort which is only to be expected in the discharge of our duty.

2. To be more engaged in thinking of the love

⁹ 1 Kings xix. 12.

and mercy of God, than in brooding over your own deficiencies.

3. To turn to Him for the measure of comfort which He shall impart, and not make *feeling* the measure and rule of *faith*.

4. To remember how very simple the duties required of you are. "To examine yourselves, whether you repent truly of your former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life, have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death, and be in charity with all men." You can hardly perform any duty well with less difficulty; more is not required to discharge one of the greatest: and in order to excite you to greater diligence in communicating, remark how many motives to bless and praise the Giver of all good. "That I may publish" (says the Psalmist) "with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works ¹."

What an inexhaustible source of meditation is the sum of benefits received at the Holy Communion! The elements themselves representing all God's gifts to us of a temporal kind, and all that we offer back to Him; recalling to our minds all that our Lord said of Himself; of His being the support and stay of our soul, of His blood shed for

¹ Psalm xxvi. 7.

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the remission of our sins, of His readiness to forgive all our offences, His tender compassion, His willing sympathy, His earnest entreaties, His fervent intercessions in our behalf, His promises of bliss eternal, union uninterrupted, glory unspeakable in the world to come. How do such thoughts call for our praise, our high and solemn praise of Him who is our sacrifice, our altar, our propitiation, our righteousness, our redemption! But if from the memorial we pass to the mystery of the Sacrament, to our union with the Lord by means of our reception of the elements, to His promise of being with us, of making us one body with Himself; what a subject for thanksgiving is here!

How fervently does the Church express the very highest language of faith in contemplation of the wondrous mystery of her present Lord! Then "we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ and Christ with us." And if we add, as the language of Scripture fully authorizes us to do, that we celebrate the mysteries, seen of angels who do honour to their Lord, and that those who are absent from us for a season, though perhaps not locally present, still worship the same Saviour, are supported by the same heavenly nutriment, and enjoy the light of the same reconciled face bent on them for evermore in love and mercy, without

the clouds of sin to hide it, surely we may say with the Psalmist, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth²;" and again, "My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary³." "For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness⁴." Let us comfort one another with these words as we press to the *threshold* of our heavenly King: for it is only His *threshold*. How blessed then must it be to enter His palace, to worship at His feet, to behold His glory, to rejoice in His goodness, to have His joy fulfilled in our souls, and that joy without measure and end! What has the Lord *there* prepared for His servants, who bestows such pledges of His bounty *here*! What does He reserve *there* for us in His promised kingdom, when He gives us Himself in this our place of sojourning, weariness, and banishment!

² Psalm xxvi. 8.³ Psalm lxiii. 1, 2.⁴ Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

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SERMON V.

THE SPIRITUAL DISADVANTAGES OF RICHES.

ST. MATTHEW xix. 23—30.

“Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

I SUPPOSE I should hardly err much from the truth if I should say, that if these words had been written in any other book than the Bible, they would have been considered to be little better

than enthusiasm. This may seem somewhat startling at first sight, yet it is evident what the generality of men would have thought of them : and the proof of it is this ; these words are in the Bible, which we know to be the word of God ; yet how very little even now are they thought of, or believed ; of all who hear or read them, is there one person in a hundred who has any firm conviction left upon his mind, that it is a great spiritual hindrance and disadvantage to be rich, and that any person possessed of a good deal of this world's possessions, must be very earnest and very serious, very pains-taking and self-denying, in fact, must do more than others do, in order to get to heaven at all ? For my part I am sure that such a notion never enters into the minds of mankind in general ; yet here it is as plainly and broadly stated as can be, without any exception, with an asseveration which our Lord used when He wished to assure His hearers of something most true and important, and to convince them of its truth, "*Verily I say unto you,*" repeated with a similitude most striking, to show that there is an immense difficulty in the case. "Again I say unto you ;" so far from qualifying what I just declared, or softening it down, or allowing it to be a mere figure of speech, I repeat it, I declare it to be true ; "it is as easy for a

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 situation that they can be. Now to test the real
 conviction and belief in the words in the minds
 of men in general, let any one imagine, that on
 awaking some morning, a letter were brought to
 him informing him, that to some friend of his, or
 we will suppose to himself, had been bequeathed
 a fortune of ten thousand pounds a year. Do
 you suppose it would ever enter into that person's
 mind (generally speaking) that such an event was
 of a very solemn, serious character ; that it might
 prove a great misfortune, that it might be in
 truth a punishment and not a blessing, and that
 at all events it had placed him in a situation
 not only of immense responsibility, but of actual
 spiritual disadvantage ? I am sure no man who
 knows the world would ever think that such
 would be the case ; and so little is the force of
 the truths of the Gospel understood, that perhaps
 there is none of us who would be sure that he
 should feel rightly in such a conjuncture. The
 intoxication of worldly joy would prove too strong

for the world, our Lord to find any entrance into the mind, and each person would flatter himself, that if there were any danger, he should now be able to do so much good with the money as to escape it.

Yet if there was any period of the world's history when it behoved us to consider our Lord's words well, it is the present time. The love of money was always the root of all evil, but it is more than ever so now. In former times men sinned against God by fierceness, cruelty, and barbarous plunder of their fellow-creatures. The rich oppressed the poor, and had them in subjection. The nobility and gentry formed parties, and engaged in bloody wars, for ambition's sake, or for honour, and the land was defiled with blood. But now none of these things take place; every man is free; the poor are respected and relieved; education is general, and men are outwardly more at peace with each other. Wealth flows in more numerous and even channels, and no man's little all is at the mercy of another. Those fierce times, then, which are now only recollected as history, being passed away, the love of money and of the world is naturally stronger than ever, for more persons are exposed to the temptation, and there are more means for gratifying the passion. As long as riches were confined to a few, multitudes might conceive

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themselves out of risk, and then the text could only apply to those few, but now this surprising declaration of our Saviour may suit us all in some measure. It may be thought that God never can or never will punish so many. But numbers make no difference to Him. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished¹."

So far then from the march of intelligence having lessened the importance of our Lord's warning, it has increased its awfulness beyond measure, inasmuch as now not a few very rich men only, but a vast multitude of men engaged in trade, who labour to be rich, whose only desire is to be rich, who are rich, though not moving in high stations in society, are exposed to the danger. Let us consider, then, as far as we may, the reasons of our Lord's saying, that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." *What then are the spiritual disadvantages of riches?*

1. There is a great tendency in riches to make us selfish, and regardless of others. Consider how the Scriptures point it out to our notice in the case of Nabal. Here was a man immensely rich, who seems to have had no family to provide for, and David had protected his cattle and servants from injury, and had been of real service to him. Yet

¹ Prov. xi. 21.

when he was asked for a little present in time of need, he churlishly replied, "Shall I then take *my* bread and *my* water, and *my* flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?" He never thought that it was God's bread and God's substance, not his own; he only thought of himself. Observe again what our Lord says of the rich fool in the parable, which, like all parables, seems intended to describe a large class of persons: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." First, it is *for many years*: he thinks nothing of the uncertainty of life, he is sure to live, and his only wish is to enjoy it, *eat, drink and be merry*. Now this is the *tendency* of all riches, the tendency, though not always the effect. Happily, by God's grace, there are many things which counteract it. The numerous calls of Christian charity; the various societies established for great ends; the objects which force themselves on our notice and compassion; the laws which insist on relief being given to the poor; the example of good rich men; the customs of a Christian country; the exhortation of Scripture, the public reading of it in our churches; the Christian ministry; all are blessed counteracting influences: still sin will fight hard, struggle

² 1 Sam. xxv. 11.

³ Luke xii. 19.

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long, and never cease to struggle till death puts an end to its reign. Besides, we do not always put off our selfishness because we give liberally. A person may be extremely selfish, and yet be called munificent; he may give what he does not want, and gratify himself in every thing he sets his heart upon. So great is the subtlety of self-deceit. And we know that a very selfish person cannot see God; for our Lord said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself⁴."

2. The great disadvantage of riches is, that they tend to make us think that our wants are many more than they really are, and so we refuse to give because we fancy that we cannot afford to give: whereas the fact is, that we could well have afforded it, had we not spent so much upon ourselves. This tendency is also greatly increased by the manners of the age. No man can revisit any great town or place of importance after twenty years' absence from it, without seeing how wonderfully the comforts and conveniences of life have increased; every thing is better and finer than it was; the luxuries of life are become necessities; the lower classes of society treading on the heels of the upper; smart dressing is become universal; the commonest houses are furnished with handsome furniture; every one is on the move, and our wants

⁴ Matt. xvi. 24.

seem to multiply in proportion to our comforts, till they are so many that we really know not how to live with them or without them. And as men become really wealthy, these artificial wants grow on them, till they swallow up a great part of real charity; and what might have maintained a missionary for half-a year, or built a portion of a school or a church, or relieved many a score of the poor, is wasted in a single dinner or supper; so that instead of, like Zaccheus, giving half their goods^s, most give not one-twentieth part, many not one-fiftieth. And it is a notorious and extraordinary fact, that many who when they were poor gave with extraordinary liberality, as soon as they became rich suddenly drew in their hand, and said they could not afford it. This is the second spiritual disadvantage of riches, that they increase the number of our artificial wants, and make us seem to be needy when we are in abundance.

3. The third is, that they tend to make us fancy ourselves independent of God, and forget the Giver. Moses saw that this was the temptation to the Israelites, for he said, "when thy silver and gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, then beware lest thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of

^s Luke ix. 8.

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bondage⁶.—But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth⁷.” How hard it is for a man born to a high estate, and nursed in luxury and ease, to think of himself as a dependent being! All things around him are subservient to his wish, he is lord of all he surveys, and master, if not of the lives, yet of the happiness of numbers; he never knows what it is to want a comfort or a pleasure, and has only to give an order and it is obeyed. How difficult for him to realize the great lesson of daily dependence on God for every thing, to believe that he is after all “poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked!” It seems as if he had nothing to ask God for in this world, as he has every thing at his command; he has no privations to expect, and therefore no motive to trust in the bounty of his Maker. I do not mean that such is always the case; God be thanked that it is often otherwise! but that such is the tendency of riches.

Again, take the case of a man of a different class, one who has risen by his own industry; who, born with no advantages of fortune, has carved out his own; who, by honesty, punctuality, and great diligence in business, has made his way in the world, and seen the prodigal and

⁶ Deut. viii. 13.

⁷ Deut. viii. 18.

foolish sinking into the pit which their own extravagance has dug for them. This man as he rises in the world, and becomes looked up to and respected, is apt to think that his success all depends on himself. Who else has done anything for him? Are not his industry and his business-habits, his punctuality and uprightness, all his own? Who ever helped him but himself? Or what has religion done for him? He has seen those so-called religious men, who could play a sly trick as well as other men, or whom he heartily despised for their want of method, and foolish extravagant ways. With such a person, the notion of his success depending on God never entered his thoughts. He has no doubt religion is of use to prevent people from being thievish and indolent, and make them respectable, but he has no other notion of it. And can a more serious disadvantage be imagined than arises from such a state of mind, in which every access of fortune ministers fresh evil? Had this man been poor and pinched with want, he might have been led to call on God for help; but now he thinks he has no need of God, and can help himself. Whereas if his view of life were the true view, of what use would be all the Scripture warnings, consolations, and promises? We should learn little from the Gospel which we could not have learned as well from a Jew, or even a heathen.

Alas! how awful must it be to open one's eyes in eternity, and find that all one has lived for is a dream! The world of independence gone; riches come utterly to an end for evermore, and mere worldly industry of no use. How awfully mistaken must he be, who lives in fancied independence of his Creator, and never realizes his own sinfulness and pollution! Such is the danger of trusting in riches. In short, the great spiritual disadvantage of riches is to make men live as if this were the only world, forgetting that it is made to be burnt up and perish, and that a world of a different kind is preparing for all who, by Divine grace and by the practice of holiness, are fitted to enjoy it.

And when once the fatal snare has taken possession of the mind, and this world is chosen as our portion, all things soon appear to conspire to the same end. The desire of wealth increases with its accumulation. The very magnitude of the object gives it a nobleness in our eyes which it does not really possess, as shadows often seem to occupy a larger space in nature than the substances. Woe be unto us if God grant us our portion here, and say, "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward!" They *have* it; they have it all; they have it in full; they shall have no other.

We have hitherto been dwelling on the special

disadvantages of riches ; but there is a merciful encouragement in the latter part of the text, without which the subject would be incomplete. "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." That these words belong, in their first and literal sense, to the Apostle, is evident from St. Peter's question, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee ; what shall we have therefore ?" They had nobly given up all—houses, and brethren, and sisters, they had left at Christ's command ; yea, life itself, the most valued of all earthly gifts, they were ready to lay down for Christ's sake. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented^s." Of self-denial so severe, of ambition so noble, of heroism so unparalleled, the world was not worthy.

But let us not suppose that because God, in mercy to our weakness, has spared us such severe and protracted suffering, that therefore the direction in the text belongs not to us. Let us not imagine, that because we cannot attain to their

^s Heb. xi. 37.

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degree, that we are not to follow them in kind, in principle; let us not think, that because Christ does not say to each of us, Sell all at once—leave nothing for thyself—no house, no domestic comforts, no quiet resting-place, no land, nor personal property: regard not the entreaties of all thy friends, the love of a sister, the grey hairs of a mother; abandon all come, and follow the painful steps of the Saviour of mankind;—let us not think, that because Christ does not say this now to all of us, that therefore He says nothing; that the text gives us no command; that there are no domestic comforts, no houses and lands to be forsaken, no personal sacrifices to be made. The text speaks not to the Apostles but to *every one*; and these words, *every one*, are as universal in application as when our Lord says, *If any man will come after me*. It is evident, then, that our Lord's command cannot in any true sense be fulfilled without a great personal sacrifice on our part. In short, we cannot come up to the standard of holiness which the Gospel requires, or, in other words, we cannot enter heaven, without that personal sacrifice. The sacrifice may not be the same in degree in all times, nor in all persons. Some have no houses or lands to give up, but all have something; and our Lord's words show us plainly, that if we think

to go to heaven with the notion of heaping all the comforts of life upon ourselves, we are most fearfully mistaken as to the way. I repeat it, holiness cannot be produced and grow in the soul under the influence of the Holy Ghost without a great personal sacrifice on our part. It is true that God must begin, continue, and end the work, and that to Him is to be ascribed all the glory of it. But this is not now the question; the question is, is anything required of us, and what is required?

And the answer to this question is in the text, that we must forsake worldly property in order to promote the cause of Christ and His Gospel in every way; that we must not be envious when we see others rich, but be thankful if we are not so encumbered; that we must be ready to disburden ourselves of our riches, and be thankful for every call of charity, as another faggot taken out of our load, another help in the difficult path, another evidence of love to Christ, and of our belief that Christ's words are really true; that heaven is a real place, and that Christ is really coming, and that His coming is at hand; that we must not measure our gifts by subscription-lists, where the rich often cloaks his avarice under the self-denying subscriptions of the less wealthy; but we must take our own means, not as they were once,

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but as they are now; not as others are doing around us, but as the Gospel tells us to do; and give what in justice, in the fear of God, in obedience to His commands, with stint and self-denial, with the fear of God's dreadful judgment-seat before our eyes, and with the love of a dying Redeemer as our pattern, we ought to give: and further, that when we have done so, it should not be in a vain, boasting, ostentatious way, but as often as we can in secret, unless where it is necessary that our light should shine before men; and, above all, with a full conviction that we do not purchase salvation by so doing, nor deserve any grace, but that God is no man's debtor, and that we are saved by God's free mercy and grace from first to last.

Whether this rule may appear to any too strict and severe, I know not. One thing I know, that it is the rule of the Gospel; and that for us who are ambassadors for Christ to take on ourselves to add to or diminish aught from the word of God, as it would be most cruel and uncharitable to you, so it would be most awfully dangerous for ourselves. But we should consider the comfort as well as the strictness of the rule. Our Lord promises such as obey it an hundred-fold even in this life; not, perhaps, in actual return of money, but in real substantial peace and consolation; and how great

the comfort is, those only know who thus employ their riches. And then the life to come is well worth waiting for; it is a regeneration, when God will make all things new; it is a harvest that will well repay the reapers; it is a "pleasure that is at God's right hand for evermore." Only let us be careful that we do not take out of the Gospel all the promises and consolations by themselves, and say, this is the Gospel: we must take the Gospel as a whole, we must believe it as a whole, we must try by God's help to obey it as a whole, and then all will be in harmony together.

We all like (by nature) to go to heaven by an easy road; let us take care that it is not *the broad road* of which we read in the Scriptures. Let us not labour to be rich; let us cease from our own wisdom; let us become fools in the world, but wise in Christ; let us be rich towards God, and heirs of heaven; let us remember that God sees what we give, when we give, how we give; and that as the covetous is an abomination to the Lord, He loveth a simple, liberal, humble, cheerful giver. In short, let us "believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.—For hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us^o."

^o 1 John iii. 23, 24.

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SERMON VI.

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE.

ST. MATTHEW vi. 28—33.

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin : and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek : for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

THERE is something very remarkable in the way in which our blessed Lord singles out natural objects, and remarks upon them in His parables and discourses. The number of such objects which He brings together, the care with which He seems to make the selection, the aptness and beauty of His comparisons, strike one's mind most forcibly : we feel it is the Mighty Maker walking

abroad in the field of His own works, and condescending to explain to His creatures the lessons to be derived from His own handy-work. One is reminded at such times of that sublime passage in the 40th chapter of Isaiah, verse 26, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth."

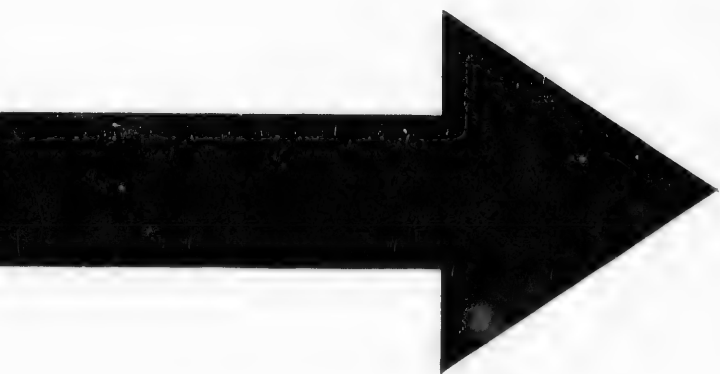
Nor is it only the divinity of our blessed Saviour which shines forth as with the light of a sunbeam from such a passage as this, but we see also the wonderful proof of God's love in His care for the smallest and meanest of His works. "The very least are the objects of His care, the greatest are not exempted from His power." He who made Orion and the Pleiades, who controls the motions of the planets and fixed the sun in his seat, clothed also the lily, protects the ant, and watches over the animated dust which escapes the notice of mortal eyes; and thus even the lowest things may be a glass to reflect His image who is the greatest of all; and whenever we walk abroad we may converse with God through His works, we may see how great and glorious and lovely He is, we may send up to Him the adoration of our hearts, the incense of our prayers, and with hearts

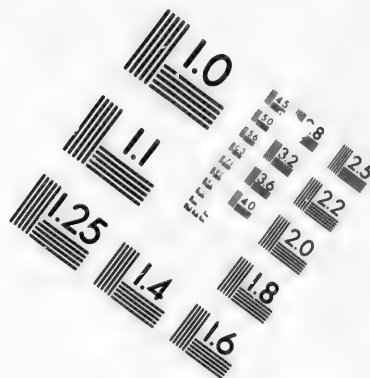
full of love for our faithful and merciful Creator, utter the inspiring words, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches!" "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the strong mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast!"

But our blessed Redeemer has taught us a lesson of a higher and somewhat more difficult kind in the passage, which is, that the consideration of God's works should not only lead us to admire and adore the Creator, and to trust Him, but to seek Him rather than His works, although we may find Him in His works. The great master sin of the human heart, is to make God's works the object and end of life, instead of the great God who made them all; to fix and centre the affections on earth instead of heaven, and so to miss our aim after all; for the secret of happiness and satisfaction must lie in Him who is the source of it; and he who goes to the stream when he is bid to slake his thirst at the fountain-head, will thirst, and seek water where there is none; like the brooks in the desert, which are most empty when they are most needed. And

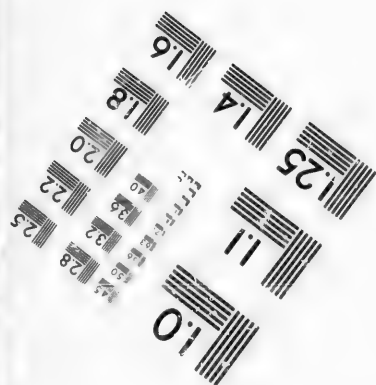
¹ Psalm civ. 24.² Psalm xxxvi. 5, 6.





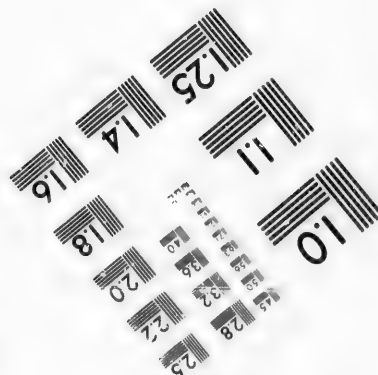


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this is one of the cautions to be given to those whose business or profession leads them to an examination of God's works. Take care, lest in your admiration of the creature you forget the Creator; and that your own skill in the discovery does not make you unmindful of Him, without whom you would never have had any thing to discover. But to return to the text, where we observe,

1. A remarkable contrast between two things very different in their nature, the one a lowly lily, growing in the field, and the other the greatest and wisest monarch who ever lived, king Solomon; and this not before he came to the throne, but after it; at the time when his power, and wisdom, and pleasure, and glory, were at their height, and yet we find the preference given to the single lily of the field. "I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

2. The application of the conclusion to ourselves, to induce us to put our whole trust in God, who cares for us: "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The real lesson of the whole is, to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, i. e. to make God the chief object of our affection, veneration, and love.

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remarkable contrast which our blessed Saviour draws between the lilies of the field and Solomon in all his glory? To our undiscerning eyes, what so strange as the comparison? The lily of the field, a small and not uncommon flower, beautiful indeed as a flower, but still only a flower; and the great monarch of the east, surrounded by all that wealth could purchase, luxury devise, wisdom provide, or pleasure fancy. Let us hear the account Solomon gives of himself in the book of Ecclesiastes³. "I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I made me gardens and orchards. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy." What an assemblage of pleasures was here! The eye, the ear, the mouth, the head, the hands, the feet, the touch, the taste, all tasked to discover a fresh satisfaction, and all equally gratified and taking their fill of earthly pleasure; and yet of all this vast accumulation of delights, how little could the

³ Ch. ii. 4—10.

great monarch enjoy at any one time! how little could he properly call his own! above all, with how little of it could he be *arrayed* or clothed! for here lies the point of the comparison. Man's clothing (let him be as rich as Solomon) can consist only of a few articles, and those few, compared with the clothing of a plant or flower, most unskilfully and rudely made. For, after all, how small is the skill that can be exercised in clothes and raiment! Examine such things by aid of the microscope, and how rude and clumsy do the finest works of art appear! How little of real genius and power of invention and contrivance is there in them! Their properties soon known, their beauty soon tires and palls upon the eye, and we fling it away and take up something else. But it is not so with flowers, with the very commonest flower we have. All here is skill, contrivance, ingenuity, art, wisdom of the very highest kind; art and wisdom so complicated, so profound, as to baffle not only our understanding, but our discovery. First, as to the outward appearance of the lily; the naked eye reveals to us but very little of its real beauty. Examine it by help of a powerful glass, and what wondrous beauties will discover themselves at the first view; every part seems as if wrought in a mould peculiar to itself; nothing unseemly, clumsy, unfinished; all elegance

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and finish of the highest kind; each part forms a separate picture and invites the eye to dwell upon it, but leaves new beauties unexplored; for as those parts upon which we used the glass seemed common and uninteresting, but after it is applied assume a beauty which to the naked eye is invisible; so, could we obtain glasses of higher powers, fresh beauties would discover themselves which now are hidden from us. So that what hinders us from seeing the perfection of the lily is simply the imperfection of our own eyes.

But this is not all; the clothing of the lily does not consist merely in its flower; the combination of all its parts, their arrangement, the order and provision made for the production of the plant and flower itself; the countless vessels by which air and moisture are supplied to it, and a thousand things invisible to our eyes, which are yet known to exist, the discovery of which surpasses all the wisdom of the greatest philosophers; and all this wisdom and beauty combined in the clothing of one single lily of the field. So that our Saviour's conclusion is justified, that much more beautiful is the clothing of the lily than the glittering raiment of king Solomon in all his glory. But our Lord only makes the comparison, to lead us by it to a higher subject. "If then God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into

the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Distrust of God, as it is one of the most common of our daily sins, so methinks it is, or should be, most unnatural, and certainly is most ungrateful, and therefore deservedly meets that just and severe rebuke in the passage, "O thou of little faith!"

The duty of trusting God in all the concerns of life is enforced on us here by two reasons; first, the little value which we set on grass; secondly, the great value which God sets on us. God, as it would seem, counts nothing so mean as to be beneath His wisdom; and therefore in making plants and flowers, which are without life, He did not make them as if they were of no importance in the creation, but made them perfect in their kind. But man deals with the plants and productions of his Maker as if they were his own, and makes but little account of them. Look, then, says our Saviour, O faithless one, at the grass: to-day it is; it lives in all its greenness, freshness, and beauty; it refreshes the eye; it adorns the landscape: it blooms forth full of fragrance; but it lives no longer! Man cuts it down, and casts it at once into the oven, where it is at once burned up. Consider then how God clothed this short-lived fading flower; with what powers and juices He furnished it; with what

hidden wondrous beauty He adorned it, and all for thy sake, that thou mightest employ it as thou wouldest! Was this one little thing the object of His care, wisdom, and providence, and dost thou think thyself forgotten? Thou, for whose sake all plants and flowers, all beasts and cattle, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever things were made, and to whom was given the dominion of all? Thou, whose own frame was so curiously and wondrously made, and no less marvellously preserved to this very hour? Thou, for whose benefit the sun rises and sets, the rain and dews descend, the rivers flow, the whole work of nature rolls wondrously around? Thou, who art clothed not only with a body, but invested with a soul, a portion of thy Creator's self, and who art thus a partaker of the Divine nature? Thou, for whose benefit the Infinite Eternal Son humbled Himself to redeem thy wretched lost nature, and raise it to the height of His own eternal glory! O faithless one, distrust not Him who died to redeem thy soul! If He so gloriously clothe the grass, with what robes of everlasting beauty will He not adorn and ennoble thee! how much more, then, will He grant thee, O fading man, garments which thy poverty needs, or thy miseries require!

Thus does our Saviour reprove our needless cares, teaching us first, to "cast all our burden

upon the Lord, and He will nourish us ;” secondly, to be less anxious about the clothing of our bodies ; and, thirdly, to be more diligent to be “ clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” On the two first of the lessons I may say a few words. The last will fall more properly under the third branch of our subject.

I say then, first, our Lord teaches us the lesson of entire, absolute reliance : not presumptuous desire, but reliance. To trust in God in the use of means is *reliance* : without the use of means, is *presumption*. The one is the work of the fanatic enthusiast, the other, of the sincere, sober-minded Christian. Yet such reliance is not common ; more common among the sincerely religious poor than among those who have not so much to trust God for. It is for this reason, no doubt, that God visits us with sickness, disappoints our hopes, brings clouds and darkness about us, that we may trust Him when difficulties arise, and become careless for the world when we have more to care for, because He careth for us. For how very certain it is that God will nourish us if we trust in Him ! As to our earthly possessions and earthly pleasures, nothing can be more uncertain than our tenure of them ; but His care of us is as certain as that there is a God above us, or a heaven in store for us ; nay, we see it daily by our own experience.

Multitudes rise up every day, not knowing how they shall get food for the day, yet God feeds them. Multitudes find themselves placed in straits through which it seems impossible to walk, yet God brings them through; the very fire loses its force, and instead of consuming, purifies; the waters which threaten to overwhelm, rise up on either side, and are as a wall for them on the right hand and on the left. O how blessed is it thus to depend on God; to put ourselves in His hand, willing to do, to be, to suffer, to enjoy none other than He allots; that so He may fill, and possess, and sanctify our souls, and make them fit for His glorious presence for ever!

And if God undertake to add His blessing to our labour, and so clothe us, should we not be less anxious about our own clothing? Above all, should we not be less solicitous about expensive clothing? It is right to speak of this, because of the extravagance in which persons indulge who even make a considerable profession of religion. This is an age of outward show. Our forefathers lavished gold upon God's house; we more prudently spend it on ourselves, though not more prudently in the end. For what a wretched satisfaction it is to take pleasure in dressing up that which must soon come to dust and ashes, while the clothing of the soul or the poor is neglected!

It is granted that the poor are as much in fault as others; but that does not justify others. I have indeed often known the poorest persons spend their little all in extravagant dress of their family; but do not those above them set them the example? Compare the sums which persons, who complain of hard times when they are asked for a subscription, lay out upon one single article of clothing, and you will soon see how miserably low our views of Christianity are. Is it not notorious that three, four, and five pounds are often given for single articles of dress by persons who, when they hear a sermon on charity, or come to the communion, put sixpence in the plate, and go away quite satisfied, as if they had done some great thing? Do you think when these things are brought before us at Christ's judgment-seat, we shall be able to look them well in the face, and give a good account of them? Will it be well then to say, I gave my five or ten pounds for an expensive dress, I laid out my fortune to keep up a handsome appearance, I was noticed as being more handsomely attired than my neighbours, when the word of God said so plainly, "Why take ye thought for raiment?" "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not

corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." I say, will all this give us any satisfaction then? Shall we make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness by expensively dressing up our bodies? Will Christ or His poor members thank us for that kind of ornament? So far from it, that He tells us He will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these, ye did it not to Me⁴."

Last of all then, from what has been said, we see how the great duty is enforced on us; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness!"

Seek the *kingdom of God*. Seek admission into it as sons and subjects; this you have already: but you must endeavour not only to have the blessing, but to realise and enjoy and improve it; for of what use is it to the undutiful son, or the rebellious subject? of what use is admission to the king's presence, if we insult him to his face?

Seek possession of the kingdom as heirs. All the riches of the kingdom are yours, the riches, the substantial enduring treasure, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure," this is what God offers you. Seek and you will find it,

⁴ Matt. xxv. 45.

and leave all else to Him. Seek the reward of the kingdom as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, for "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life," and "the husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits;" and if others do it to obtain a corruptible crown, "let us so run that we may obtain an incorruptible one⁵." Seek *His righteousness*, seek to be made righteous like Him: not only justified and accounted righteous, but sanctified, and actually so, for the one cannot be without the other.

Seek all this first, with most earnest desires, with most intense application, with most ardent hopes, with most vigilant prayers, with your most unceasing perseverance. "Be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ⁶:" and so earthly things will be added unto you, and what is better, heavenly things shall be added also. For if God so clothe the lily, the beauteous yet fading lily, how much more gloriously will He clothe them who put on His own bright wedding-robe in the kingdom of heaven? Even the lily is a hidden beauty, it invites the examination: it bears, and yet defies it. But the Christian's clothing is Christ Himself, Christ is his meat and

⁵ 1 Cor. ix. 25.

⁶ 1 Pet. i. 13.

reward of Christ, for if with the an that la- ts ;" and if n, "let us ble one s." righteous ted righte- r the one

drink, Christ is his bridal-robe, Christ his eternal home. In Him he lives, by Him he acts, on Him he feeds, for Him he works, and labours not in vain. Called for a little season to put off this tabernacle, he awakes up out of the dust at the word of his Lord, and puts on clothing new, unfading, glorious.

Oh ! these thoughts are too bright for us to dwell upon : like the gleams of sunshine that dart upon us from underneath the thunder-cloud, they seem too strong for our weak sight to endure. Heavenly Father, purify our hearts, that we may see Thee face to face, and our lives may be still preserved ; and that, feeding on the precious banquet of life-giving food, we may not only "have life, but have it more abundantly."

SERMON VII.

INFANT BAPTISM.

1 Cor. vii. 14.

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband : else were your children unclean ; but now are they holy.”

WE are told by the Apostle St. Peter that it is our duty not only to believe, but to be able to give a reason for our faith, provided we do so not in a contentious or angry spirit, but with “meekness and fear.” It is for this reason among others that I design to dwell on the subject of Infant Baptism.

We have this afternoon consecrated our infant children to God : we have surrendered them into the arms of Christ : we have admitted them into the pale of the Christian covenant. They are now members of Christ, and heirs of the

kingdom of heaven with ourselves. They have the title, and also the right to all the blessings of the Gospel. Forgiveness of sin, and with it the love of the Father, the grace of the eternal Son, the presence and consolation of the indwelling Spirit, *all these are theirs*: theirs at present by that grace of God which always loves us before we love Him; and hereafter also, if when they come to years of reason they call upon God, pray for the Spirit's help, and by that help lead a new life. These are simple truths within the reach and understanding of all. But it is right that we should know why and how these things are so: that we see the foundation on which they are built: not only because some are disposed to cavil at them, and reproach us for so doing, but because much of our wisdom and all our comfort depends on the assurance of our faith, on our being thoroughly persuaded in our own minds. If we bring our children to baptism half doubting, half afraid, and not knowing whether we do right or no, we lose all the comfort of doing well, even when we do so.

The reasons for Infant Baptism, and the advantages to all parties concerned, will form the first part of my discourse.

The duties which belong to parents, sponsors,

and young persons who have been baptized, will naturally form the second.

In the passage which I have read to you from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul is considering the duties of married persons to each other. In early times these duties gave rise to questions of considerable difficulty. For supposing two parties to have been married whilst living as heathens, and one of them (say the wife) became converted to Christianity, the question would immediately arise, What is she to do? Is she to continue to live with her idolatrous husband? Is she, who has been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light¹, to remain bound by the marriage tie to one who still knows not God? The answer of the Apostle is, that she ought so to continue. For, says he, it may be that in answer to her prayers, the unbelieving husband may become Christian. Besides, the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. The marriage union remains the same as it was; the grace of the Gospel is so far from dissolving it, that it sanctifies both. The husband is in a manner accounted holy for the sake of his wife: for the wife being a member

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

of Christ, and so one with Christ, and also one with the husband, it is as if he already belonged to the same spiritual body, though he do not at present form part of it. So is it with your children, they are now holy and clean: not like heathen children, shut out from the Gospel privileges and blessings, and pronounced by the law unclean: but like Jewish children, like the children of Abraham, brought within the pale of the covenant, sanctified by admission into the visible Church, through the Christian ordinance of Baptism.

The Apostle does not, you see, here merely mean those children who were legitimate, for had both the parents been unbelievers, their union would still have been lawful: but he uses the words *clean*, *holy*, and *sanctified*; the circumstance of their having a Christian parent who would bring them to baptism making them so. For as the promise given to Abraham was to him and to his seed, so the promise made by Christ is to Christians and their seed. If therefore the holy seed among the Jews were to be circumcised and admitted into the visible Church, and so accounted clean and holy, so by like reason are the children of a Christian parent to receive the sign of the covenant, be admitted into the Christian Church, and be accounted

thereby clean, holy, and separate from the heathen world around them. The argument which may be drawn from the words of the Apostle for infant baptism is, I think, clear and strong. But it proceeds on the analogy between the rite of circumcision, as the sign of admission into the covenant made with Abraham; and the rite of baptism, as the sign of admission into the covenant made with believers in Christ.

Let us now consider the similitude between them. The words of the covenant into which Abraham was brought were these:—"I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee; and I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee all the land of Canaan. And this is My covenant which ye shall keep between Me and you, and thy seed after thee; Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. He that is not circumcised shall be cut off from My people; he hath broken My covenant²." Now St. Paul informs us expressly, that this was the same covenant, in fact, which is made with believers in Christ. He tells us that under the temporal promises were hid the better things of

² Gen. xvii.

the Gospel; and that these good things to come formed the chief desire of the patriarchs, that they were the objects of their faith, and the reward they sought for. "All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth³." So that these blessings were not promised to Abraham and his seed only, but to all who should hereafter believe; for "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise⁴." Since then the promise given to Abraham was substantially a Gospel promise; since Abraham was the father of believing Gentiles as well as of circumcised Jews, and the heir of the covenant, not by himself or his carnal seed, but by Christ and His spiritual seed; it is evident that the promises connected with circumcision are the same substantially with those that are made over to us by baptism; and therefore if Abraham's infants were then admitted into the covenant, so may ours: if, in the case of Isaac, circumcision was a sign and seal of the promises of God, so in the case of our children, baptism is a sign and seal of the same. For observe what would

³ Heb. xi. 13.⁴ Gal. iii. 29.

follow if infants were admitted into the Jewish covenant, but denied admission into the Christian covenant. What I say would follow, but that the mercies of God are straitened and diminished under the Gospel: that God, who sent His blessed Son into the world to fulfil all the promises, and bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel, and bring in a dispensation of peculiar and abundant grace and mercy and truth,—that God has in this His wonderful storehouse of grace, made less provision for the children of parents who live after the death of His Son, than He did before our Saviour came into the world. As if there could be less light and heat now the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, than there was before the world saw Him rise. As if the blessed Redeemer, who was much displeased when His disciples rebuked those who brought children to Him, and blamed those that would have kept them from Him, had made no provision for the lambs of His flock, whom He is said “to gather with His arm and carry in His bosom.” God forbid that we should entertain so unworthy a thought! “for if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto

many⁵." We have thus spoken of the argument for infant baptism from the covenant given to Abraham, and have shown that Christianity more especially is a dispensation of more abundant grace. Indeed it is incredible that this objection would not have at once occurred to the Jews. If a Jew, when solicited to embrace Christianity, had found that his children, hitherto members of the stock of Abraham, and in covenant with God, were now become aliens from the covenant of promise, what must have been his reflections? Must he not have said, Shall I, to whom the promise is given, forsake the religion of my fathers, for one which offers me no compensatory promise, no comfortable hope, no covenant love for my children, as well as for myself? You tell me that grace and truth come by Jesus Christ; that more love, more mercy, more abundant grace is now to be obtained. How is this, when I find that the seal of the covenant is wanting?

The fact that no such objection occurs, is a strong indication that it was met at once by the admission of infants to the fold of Christ. But we proceed to another reason for infant baptism. *Infants are born in original sin.* This is evident

⁵ Rom. v. 15.

both from Scripture and from experience: from Scripture, which says, "in Adam all die⁶," "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness; and in sin did my mother conceive me⁷." "If one died for all, then were all dead⁸:" from experience, because infants who commit no actual sin are sick, suffer, and die. Infants who therefore are, without any sin of their own, partakers of their fathers' sin, i. e. of the guilt and corruption of it, must be made partakers of Christ's death, and the Bible teaches us that by baptism we are so made partakers; St. Paul says, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life⁹." And if God has appointed that adults who come to baptism with a heavy load of actual sin hanging over them, may still, as St. Peter said to the Jews, obtain "remission of their sins," how much more may infants, (who have no actual sin to repent of,) if they be brought to baptism! How is it that infants innocent of actual sin suffer and die? Not for their own sin, but the sin of that nature wherewith they were born, and which came not upon them by their own reason and choice,

⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

⁷ Psalm li. 5.

⁸ 2 Cor. v. 14.

⁹ Rom. vi. 4.

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but by the permission of God. Surely, then, it is but reasonable to bring them to God at once, that He may cleanse them from sin, and make them His children. But here an objection meets us at first starting, and as it is an objection on which the opponents of infant baptism in a great measure rest the strength of their cause, it may be proper to notice it. Remission of sin is promised in baptism to those who repent and believe; for it is said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ⁸." Now infants are not capable of repentance and faith, therefore not proper subjects for baptism.

But what does this notable argument prove? To what end does it proceed? Far otherwise than those who rely on it suppose; for if the words of our Saviour are to be taken in the sense, that none but such as believe (whether they are capable of the act of faith or no) may be baptized, they must be taken to mean a great deal more than this, that none but such as actually believe can be saved; and so the same declaration which excludes them from baptism will shut them out of heaven altogether: and who will dare to say this?

But God, it will be said, saves infants by extraordinary means. Has God any where in His

⁸ Mark xvi. 16.

Word told us so? If infants may go to heaven without faith, why not to the font? if to the crown, why not to the cross? if they can obtain that glorious end, in order to which the sacrament of baptism was appointed as one of the means, then why not to the means themselves? for why, says Bishop Taylor, will any keep infants from the Church, when they cannot keep them from God? or require harder conditions for being baptized than for being saved? Now it is observable, that those who refuse to take their children to baptism, are themselves of necessity guilty of the same inconsistency they espy in others. For suppose I deprive my child of the benefit of the ordinance of baptism, still I must not leave him without any teaching: he must be taught some prayers, must be taken to the house of God, and bid to worship with the visible Church in the congregation. What shall I then teach him? To say the Lord's prayer? And how does the Lord's prayer begin? "*Our Father*, which art in heaven." And who that is unbaptized, that is not in covenant with God, that is not a member of the visible Church, has a right to say that prayer which our Lord taught His disciples to use? The very fact of the child's calling God, "*Our Father*," implies that he is a member of Christ's Church, and belongs to God as the child of a reconciled

and covenant Father, related to the covenant Head, even to Christ Jesus: which is the very thing that is done for the child in baptism. But we meet this argument further by that on which our Church so justly lays great stress,—our Lord's invitation to poor, weak, sinful babes, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me^o." It seems that there were then some persons, and these Christ's own disciples, who deemed the little ones unworthy of a place in the Redeemer's arms; of an entrance into His kingdom; and therefore to correct such, and as if to anticipate an error, He said, "Forbid them not¹;" and added, "*of such* is the kingdom of heaven." And here observe the whole force of the argument. These infants came not to Him themselves, they were too young; they were brought by others: the disciples blame not the children, but those who brought them; and Christ is much displeased with them. He further takes occasion from this to establish a general precept; "Suffer the little children to come unto Me;" and more than that, "forbid them not;" as if He knew that men would forbid them. Then He gives them His blessing, no temporal good we are assured; then He says, "the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, and is

^o Mark x. 14.¹ Mark x. 15.

composed of such ;” the least part of which is, that they are admissible to that kingdom, and if to the kingdom, surely to the sacrament ; and, last of all, that the kingdom is not of *these*, but of *such* : not of the infants there present, but of such as them, *i. e.* it belongs to all infants. Why, then, should they be hindered ? No ;—unless they who could come to Christ on earth may not now come to Him when He is in heaven ; unless they who had the honour of being placed in Christ’s own arms may not be placed in the hands of His ministering servants ; unless to be admitted into the Church on earth, be more than to be admitted into the Church above ; it cannot reasonably be pretended that infants are to be shut out from this sacrament². And then, if we consider the manifold advantages which this rite gives us in our conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, we shall see its importance more distinctly. We all know the value of first impressions and early recollections ; and if parents would only recall these impressions to the minds of their children, tell them what was done for them, why it was done, what they are expected to do ; if sponsors would follow up the duties they have undertaken, and recollect if these things are not done as they ought

² See Bishop Taylor, vol. viii. 183.

to be, the fault is not in baptism, the fault is not in the Church, it is in ourselves; I say, if all this were done, the effect would be blessed indeed. Even as it is, many good effects arise. Is remission of original sin, and the promise of the sponsors, and the membership of Christ, and the title to heaven, nothing in our eyes? Is it nothing to us that we can go and spread all our desires before the Lord for each one of our baptized children, and say, "Lord, this child I received from Thy hands; lo! I bring him back to Thee, according to my Saviour's command: I place him in Thy arms; he is a sheep of Thy fold, a lamb of Thy flock, a member of Thy Church, a partaker of the death of Thy Son, an heir of Thy promises, a branch, though a tender one, of the true vine. O keep him from the snares that are in the world! Fulfil the designs of Thy covenant love, by which Thou didst say, 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom'.³ Let Thy bowels of mercy rescue Thy own offspring from the power of eternal death. O Thou physician of souls! heal the soul of this child. O Thou well of living water! spring up within him to everlasting life." Is all this nothing? Is it nothing

³ Isa. xl. 11.

to be able to turn to the sponsors, and say, "You undertook to remind this my child of his duty to God; you promised to co-operate with me in my charge of him. I ask you to join me in prayer, in daily heartfelt prayer, to the throne of heavenly grace, that the vows which he has made through you may be accomplished. I ask you to regard this child with an interest and affection which belongs to those who place it in the arms of Christ. I ask you to instruct it, as need be and occasion given. I ask you by your own example and steadiness in Christian conduct to go before and lead the way to heaven." Is all this, again I say, nothing? Tell me not, I repeat it, that this is not done. What then? Doth your "unbelief make the promise of God of none effect? God forbid! let God be true and every man a liar⁴." O let us truly value baptism as we ought; let us look on it more as the Primitive Christians looked on it; let us pray the Lord to increase our faith, and then we shall be strengthened to fulfil the responsibilities which are involved in the office we have undertaken!

I have omitted one important part of the argument for infant baptism:—the testimony of the Church. And by the testimony of the Church,

⁴ Rom. iii. 3, 4.

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I mean not the testimony of one good man, or two, or three, or twenty good men who took up this as an opinion, but the whole entire consent in doctrine and practice of the various branches of the Christian Church, for the first fifteen-hundred years; and not only their consent to the doctrine of infant baptism, but their clear and decided testimony that such was the doctrine and practice of the Apostles, and that as they taught, so the Church believed, and handed on from age to age what was transmitted to them. And if any man is bold enough to say that he thinks the uncontradicted testimony of Christians of the Catholic Church is of no weight or avail with him, I set him down for one of the headstrong persons whom Job rebuked, saying, "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you⁵." Enough has now been said for one discourse, to show the reasons for infant baptism, viz. the analogy which it bears to the rite of circumcision, both being rites under the same covenant of grace; the necessity that infants born in original sin should be made partakers of the benefits of the death of Christ; the express injunctions of our Saviour respecting it; and the testimony of the Church. Let me conclude with a few words of affectionate

⁵ Job xii. 2.

advice to parents, sponsors, and young persons in general. Parents, I may congratulate you on the blessings your children have received, that blessing which a Saviour's love hath purchased and a Saviour's grace bestowed, viz. that of baptism; they are now members incorporate of the Church of Christ, this is their spiritual birth-day. May it be to them the beginning of a new life! You may rejoice that, though not out of the reach of the enemy of souls, nor out of danger from his attacks, nor free from indwelling sin and natural corruption, the effects of which will soon manifest themselves in their hearts and lives, yet still they are under the care of their Saviour; His wisdom is their shield, His arm their support; and if they call upon Him, He will regard their prayers. These blessings, however, lay on you a heavier responsibility to strive by all your care and diligence that the good seed be not lost, to water it with your prayers and tears, remembering what was said of St. Augustine, "The child of so many prayers cannot be lost."

One word as to your choice of sponsors; you ought not only to choose those whom you believe entertain a serious sense of the duties of that office, but not to select any but communicants for it. That will be one security, though not the only one necessary, that they

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will be taught to respect the words of Christ, and it is to be hoped, may have a good example before their eyes. And now to sponsors: yours is a very serious, solemn, important duty; and you should enter on it with a deep humility, with an entire distrust of yourselves, with repeated prayer to God that He would impress you with a conscientious determination to perform those engagements which you have undertaken. You need not fear with such views to enter upon the responsibility; you need not be driven from it by a superstitious fear that you are to bear the sins, or discharge the duties of the child. This is a mere vulgar error: what your part is, the Church has told you, to see that the child be taught as soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he hath made by you. But enter not on it in a spirit of lightness! What a shocking crime it is for a sponsor to come and promise these things for a child, whilst he knows in his heart that he has no intention of fulfilling them! I do not believe that any of you would act in this manner; but fly from every profanation of this sacred rite. Take the office in sincerity and prayer, or do not take it on you at all.

And now, what shall I say to those dear babes in Christ, whom I have this afternoon committed

to my Saviour's arms, knowing that He is "able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day⁶." They cannot understand our voice, but "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God will perfect praise⁷." Christ has impressed them with His cross, has sealed them with the tokens of His love; let us give thanks and praise Him for the benefit, and join in the devout prayer of our spiritual mother; "God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with His favour look upon you; and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that ye may so live to His glory in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting."

⁶ 2 Tim. i. 12.

⁷ Psalm viii. 2.

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SERMON VIII.

TREASURE IN HEAVEN.

ST. MATTHEW vi. 21.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

It is very remarkable to hear our blessed Lord discourse with poor and mean people about the danger of riches. Looking at the surface of things only, one might have said, How needless to tell a few poor fishermen not to accumulate wealth, when they had no wealth to lay up! how superfluous to caution them about earthly treasures, when their nets were their all, and even these they had left behind them at Christ's command! Are the followers of the Son of man, who had not where to lay His head, in danger of being too rich?

This kind of superficial reasoning is no doubt often thought of by many, who, because they

are poor, or at all events not very rich, fancy themselves out of the reach of such cautions and exhortations, and that they who must labour for their bread, and with some difficulty make both ends meet, are in no danger whatever from the love of riches. And evil-disposed persons are sure to be found, who will teach themselves and others to point with a malignant, envious eye at their brethren, and imagine that the exhortation is both very suitable, and very much needed by *them*, who are, as it is supposed, the only persons who require it. Now all this is gross trifling with the Word of God. Our Lord, who never looked upon the surface of things, but always into the very depths of the human heart, saw that the love of earth in preference to heaven is the great ruling passion of the human mind; that this is the chief thing which needs correction in us all; and that, therefore, the poor require to be as much reminded of this as the rich. Greediness, covetousness, sensuality, low earthly desires, are not peculiar to one class of men, but the common and besetting sin of all; and as in speaking to His disciples our blessed Lord spake to us, and not to this or that person among us, but to each and all of us; so let us be assured that in hearing or reading this passage, a special warning is intended for each

of us, in some matter in which we are more tempted and less on our guard than our neighbour. In short, those who wish to profit by sermons, should come not to criticise, but to pray. For a sad and bitter thought it is for us who preach, that the discourses on which we have bestowed both labour and prayer seem to be thrown away on many who listen to them for the moment, if they listen at all, as an idle tale, which serves but to pass away the time, and is then cast aside. However, it is not so, happily, with all; and even if it were, our duty is still the same. ✕ One soul saved out of this present evil world, and made eternally happy in the world to come, is worth a whole life of prayer and preaching. ✕ But there is a reason why we should especially pray over this passage, because it is one of those selected by the Church for the offertory at the communion service. "Lay not up for yourselves" (it is a passage which goes to prove the text) "treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal¹." And that which follows

¹ Matt. vi. 19, 20.

is to the same purpose. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" We are here, then, called on to consider the danger of laying up treasures upon earth—for several reasons which our blessed Lord assigns. But what is this treasuring up of treasures, of which our blessed Lord here speaks?

Now all earthly things have both a real and a relative, or a supposed value. Their relative, or supposed value, is their relation to *TIME*. Their real value is, their relation to *ETERNITY*. In themselves they have no real value at all. Of what value is a piece of gold, or silver, or stone in itself, except as to the use we put it to, and the esteem we have of it? Thus, when the Spaniards discovered Cuba, they found the natives perfectly ignorant that there was any value in gold, and astonished why they made so many inquiries after it. To them a piece of glass or iron was more valuable than all the gold mines in the world. I mention this to show that it is not the possession of great sums

² Matt. vi. 22, 23.

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of money to which our Lord is alluding, but to making earthly things a treasure, and esteeming them as our real, our only treasure. For we may turn any thing we please into a treasure, and esteem it so dearly as to be willing to part with half our substance for it. Collectors of curiosities do not value things for their beauty, but for their rarity; and often give ten times the price for a thing because it is ugly, if it happen to be very uncommon. So that you see it is not the thing itself, but our choice and esteem of it that makes it so valuable to us. One may illustrate this further, by considering how we deal with the self-same things under different circumstances. Suppose, for example, a person going to Australia or the East Indies: how common it is for him to sell the very things on which he set so much value. To say, It is of no use for me take them; or, I need not be of any use to me when I get there; or, I need not take them out with me, for I shall find them in abundance when I get there! So that which he would not have parted with on any consideration, had he stayed at home, he lets go without a pang in the thought of his far-journey. So it was when St. Paul was shipwrecked, they cast every thing into the sea, the wheat, the wares, the very tackling of

the ship, all went overboard to preserve what was of more value than all—life; nor did they regret that they had cast them away. Now our Lord will have us measure and value every thing by its relation to heaven. Heaven is the universal measure of all things on earth, and they assume a greater or less value according to the actual relation which they sustain to heaven. Riches are valuable, if they may be laid up there. Honour is valuable, if it may be continued there. Pleasure is valuable, if it may be enjoyed there. And as here vast riches are conveyed in a small compass, so the diminution of the bulk of our treasures does not detract from their value, if they be treasures in heaven. This will explain to you, I think, what our blessed Lord probably means by “treasuring up treasures” on earth. It is giving to any thing whatever such a value in our own minds, that we are unwilling to part with it for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. It is not merely things absolutely sinful that He means, for these we are always called on to part with, and that at once; but things of which God has given us the possession, and of which, according to our use or abuse of them, they will be treasures or no treasures to us. If we use them in reference to eternity, they are real treasures. If we use them in reference to earth,

they are only imaginary treasures, and of no more value than a piece of base coin. It is not that a person is required to have the impression of eternity before him in every single action that he does, as if he must work, and eat, and buy, and sell, and think of heaven all the while: this would be mere pretence: but that he should have such an habitual intent, such a single-hearted desire to glorify God, and hope for heaven, and not for earth, as to be ready to part with this or that whenever God calls for it, and to dispose of every thing he has as God sees fit to have it disposed of. For example, does God call him to a high station and give him wealth? He is not obliged immediately to sell all he has and give it away. If he choose to do so for the love of God, it would indeed be an acceptable offering to the Lord; for there was one young man to whom our Lord said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven³." But He does not intimate that no young men would be saved who did not, but He would try the strength and the love of that young man. There were again many in the Apostles' times who sold all

³ Matt. xix. 21.

that they had; but, as Peter says, there was no obligation to do so; and St. Paul expressly says, "Charge them that are *rich* in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate¹:" which he would not have done if all had sold all that they had, because there would have been no riches left: but what such a person is called to do, is to take care that his riches are neither wasted in idle extravagance and riotous living, nor penuriously hoarded up to his own dishonour and the injury of his brethren; and that instead of continually accumulating vast sums, he should be laying out, in proportion to his incomings, to the glory of God. But perhaps those who have not the responsibility of great riches, are quite as much in danger of laying up treasures upon earth. For being used to get all that they possess by very small sums, and so prudently to take care of every farthing, they are easily tempted to set an inordinate value upon money, and to be very reluctant to part with it. They know its relative value better than most others,

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

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but they forget that this is not its real value, which is to be measured by eternity; and so all their delight being fixed upon money-getting, they look no higher. A sad thought it is, that an immortal soul, born for eternity, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, more precious than all the money in the world, more precious than the world itself, more precious than a thousand such worlds as ours, should throw itself away upon mere dust and trash.

You may now, my brethren, (if you have attended to this discourse,) have seen what it is to lay up treasures in heaven, what it is to love things earthly more than God, the setting our affections any lower than heaven. Ask yourselves, I beseech you, Is this the case with me? Let me appeal to such as attend the holy table, and profess to feast upon a Saviour's body and blood. Is this your besetting sin? Have you such a love of money, or of any earthly treasures, that you cannot part with them at your Lord's command? On what are your chief affections fixed? What is your one ruling desire? Is it to live to God's glory here, and to live with Him for ever? Let me also entreat such as do not attend, seriously to think what keeps them away. Whether any thing short of having our treasures on earth can detain a truly loving soul from its

Redeemer's table? Whether any excuse be really sufficient? Whether the ordinary reasons given are not mere pretences? Whether the reason in your case be not after all some shallow excuse, which you never will venture to urge before God Almighty, your Eternal Judge, at His tribunal? Whether, if you thought you should depart out of the world to-night, any one who can attend, would stay away, and not rather trim his lamp, and fit himself for the marriage^s? Whether many waverers and loiterers on the road would not be determined by the summons to the grave? Well! you cannot tell but it may be so. You have often met without a summons, but you may be summoned unexpectedly; there are frequent instances of such events, and some such lately within our recollection. Oh! why should you need so frequent admonitions? Why should you not hasten without any admonition at all, to save and benefit yourselves, and enrich yourselves with a Saviour's love and blessing, the greatest boon in all the world?

But let us meditate a little on the reason our Lord gives for not setting our affections and laying up treasures here below, but above. In the former verses He says, it is useless, for they may

^s Matt. xxv. 7.

be taken from you ; if you heap up clothes, the moth will eat them ; if you hoard up metals, the rust will corrupt them ; or if not, thieves often break through and steal them ; but there are treasures imperishable. But suppose all your treasure safely deposited, still, as your heart is with your treasure, you are chained and bound down to earth, grovelling here below, and unable to mount up to heavenly things. And think what a thing it is for a soul born for eternity to throw itself away on time ; for that which is in itself immortal, incorruptible, and imperishable, to set its affections on that which is mortal, corrupt, and perishable ! Think what a low grovelling pleasure it is ! how thoroughly contemptible ! how truly miserable !

Your treasure is on earth : it is in a world uncertain, changing every hour ; the face of which is never a month together the same ; in a world full of sin and pollution, made to be destroyed, so that your treasure must eventually perish with it ; and you perish with your treasure, if you have no other. Think how you will look back on your treasure when you see it vanishing away before your eyes ; when you see this, your much-loved world, so small a portion of which was ever yours, not half what you wished for and expected, and not only a little portion gone, but all gone ;

how will you look back upon it, and think, for this wretched morsel I have sold my birthright; for this poor decaying portion of a world now come to nought, I have bartered away my best, my only, my eternal treasure, which others enjoy, and I might have enjoyed, which was my proper birthright as a Christian, my own possession, purchased for me at so dear a price as my Saviour's precious life, and body, and blood! And when you see that blessed Saviour as He is, and behold how glorious and divine a Being laid down His life that He might save yours, and give Himself for you, how will you despise yourself for neglecting a treasure so vast and incalculable, to seize at a shadow which eludes your grasp, to please and delight yourself with a phantom and a dream!

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” How truly delightful is it to have our treasure above, to be really and earnestly seeking a better inheritance than the world can afford at the best; to be willing to part with it for our Saviour's sake; and to be daily learning to think less of earth and more of heaven; to be conscious that our better part is there, where no rust can wear it out, no moth consume it, no robbers steal it from us; to know that it is imperishable in itself, that “it neither moulders by time, nor is swept off by

the floods of ungodly men, nor blown away by the breath of calumny, nor undermined by envy," nor are there any seeds of mortality and dissolution about it; to have a lively hope that it is waiting for us, hid with Christ in God, ready to be manifested the moment He shall appear in His glory!

A sincere belief in such a treasure as this must carry our hearts along with it. In proportion to our belief in its existence must be our sense of its power; our affections will be raised towards it in accordance with our faith, and though our bodies must be here, our hearts will be there. We shall desire to depart and to be with Christ. Death will be deprived of its sting when it is following our Lord; and the grave will lose its victory when it becomes our bridal chamber. "Looking for," says an Apostle, "and *hasting unto* the coming of Jesus Christ⁶;" not clinging to the world as long as we can, and only giving it up when we can get nothing more from it; but willing to part with it at a moment's notice, being thoroughly persuaded that it has nothing to offer us in comparison with Heaven. Let us come to the holy feast, to seek that grace which alone can guide our apprehension of these glorious truths, and make us live as if we felt and appreciated

⁶ 2 Pet. iii. 12.

them; that when the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we may "revive as the corn, and grow as the vine," as the true branches of that heavenly vine, whose fruit we shall then "drink new in the kingdom of Heaven."

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SERMON IX.

THE OLD TESTAMENT, ITS RELATION TO THE
NEW.

ROMANS XV. 4.

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for
our learning.”

It is very often thought by persons who look only on the surface of things, that the Bible is the simplest and plainest book in the world, so that a person has only to take it into his hands at once to understand it. This is partly true and partly false. In one respect it is true. There is so much in the Scriptures that is very plain and simple, that if a person takes up the Sacred Volume with a view to learn his duty, and with a humble and sincere mind, it is not probable that he will err very greatly. But in another respect the notion of the *Bible's plainness* is totally false. If a person takes in his hands

the Bible in a disputatious spirit, or with a view of finding a text to support him in previous notions, which he has embraced without sufficient information to guide him to a right conclusion, he is likely enough indeed to find texts for his purpose, but is almost certain to be misled. For the Scripture is not only full of plain and easy precepts which cannot mislead, but of deep and difficult arguments, which may be very easily misunderstood. Even in the fundamental doctrines of our faith, collected in the Apostles' Creed, such as the Trinity, the Holy Catholic Church, our belief in the Holy Ghost—as belief requires submission and humility, and heresy is very easy, a man had need to be very cautious lest he err. And, probably, none of us would have been able to have formed a list of fundamental doctrines for himself out of the Bible. One thing is certain, that when men try to make a list separate from that which we find in the creeds, they can never agree as to what it shall be, so that we may be very thankful that it has been made for us, and we may be quite sure that we cannot make a better.

Now among the difficult points of Holy Scripture, and it is a difficulty which comes home to every man's mind who thinks at all, the relation which the Old Testament bears to the New Tes-

tament is one. We find two Testaments bound up in one volume, called the Bible. These two Testaments contain an account of two different dispensations, the Jewish and the Christian, and of God's founding two Churches, the Jewish and the Christian, which, more properly, are but one Church.

Now many persons may have asked the question of themselves, without being able to answer it, what have we to do with the Old Testament? as the Jewish dispensation is removed to make way for the Christian, is the Old Testament removed too? We no longer circumcise infants, we no longer sacrifice oxen and doves, we have no longer a single temple to which all men must resort three times a year, women are no longer excluded from holy rites, we have no more a high-priest going alone once a year into an inner sanctuary—all these things are gone,—is the book which contains them a dead letter? This is a very natural question, and it is plain that it *might* be answered in the affirmative; and, indeed, I have often heard poor persons express their conviction that it is so, considering what they call the Bible, the Old Testament, as no longer necessary for our instruction. That this, however, is not the case, is at once and for ever decided by several passages in the New Testament. In one, our

blessed Saviour says, "Search the Scriptures¹," where He is obviously speaking of the Old Testament, because none of the New Testament had then been written. And He would not have bidden us to search had there been nothing for us to find. Secondly, St. Paul says, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness²." In the expression "all Scripture," is included the Old and the New Testament. Thirdly, my text asserts, that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" by which expression, "were written aforetime," is evidently meant the Scriptures of the Old Testament. So that the Old Testament is no less a guide and help to patience, comfort, and hope than the New. Fourthly, St. Paul, warning the Corinthian Church against certain sins into which they were in danger of falling, draws his arguments from the privileges of the Jewish Church, as types and examples of the Christian; "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples³," or, to render the word literally, as types. Here, then, is a large fund of instruction to be drawn from the Old Testament,

¹ John v. 39.² 2 Tim. iii. 16.³ 1 Cor. x. 6.

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 I need not multiply texts ; these are sufficient to
 establish the point, that the Old Testament is not
 a dead letter, but full of important instruction, if
 we know how to use it. And so the article of
 our Church, "The Old Testament is not contrary
 to the New, and they are not to be heard who
 feign that the old fathers did look for transitory
 promises." But still the question recurs, if the
 Old Testament be not contrary to the New, and
 not only not contrary, but abounding in important
 instruction, and if nevertheless the Jewish rites
 and ceremonies be not practised in the Christian
 Church, how shall we make the one square with
 the other ? What relation has the Jewish economy
 to the Christian ? What similitude has Judaism
 to Christianity ? Do the two dispensations run
 in parallel lines, like two equal and concurrent
 streams, or is one the foundation and type of the
 other ? This is a subject that requires time and
 thought, and cannot conveniently be brought
 within the compass of a single discourse ; I there-
 fore purpose to devote three or four mornings to
 it, as the subject may require ; considering, first,
 the types ; secondly, the promises ; and thirdly,
 the precepts of the Old Testament. For the
 present, I shall confine myself to the general
 question of the relation of the Old Testament

with the New. The subject, then, may be explained first, by a reference to our Lord's remarkable sayings in His Sermon on the Mount, in St. Matt. v. 17. He there says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." The words "*think not*," are a caution to those who might naturally speak of Him as a *new teacher*, who would begin (as new teachers are apt to do) by destroying and doing away with all that others had done before Him. "This is not," says He, "my purpose; I came not to annul, to cancel, to blot out the law and the prophets, and to make the Old Testament a dead letter; I came to *fulfil*, to give effect to all that has gone before, to give a substance to the shadow, a soul to the body. And as when the body is present, the shadow of which had been seen preceding it, the shadow is not done away because the body is there, but follows it, instead of going before it; so I came to fulfil the law and the prophets. They spake of Me. I am referred to in them. I appeal to them as the witnesses to My Divine character, mission, and authority. I bid you look to them as the types of all that I shall do for the salvation of mankind; I act agreeably to them, inasmuch as My actions are the subject of the several prophecies therein contained. In the promises which

I shall make to My Church, you will see the full meaning and development of the concealed promises of the Old Testament, and in My precepts you may discover the perfect explanation of what was by the ancients spoken, but improperly understood." The words of our blessed Lord are still further explained by reference to a passage in St. John's first Epistle; "A new commandment I write unto you. Again, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning⁴." How could the commandment to love one another be both old and new at the same time? It was old, because it was delivered from the first; it was as old as the creation, though the terms in which it was conveyed are obscure, and therefore its force and extent were not understood. It was new, because it was now explained; it was enlarged to its full extent, it was delivered in a new manner, it was enforced by new motives, new examples, and new promises. It was old, as the acorn is the germ of the mighty oak; it was new, as the plant springs up out of its mother earth, and becomes a huge and spreading tree, the progenitor of other

⁴ 1 John ii. 7.

trees, and the reward of the toil and enterprise of mankind.

But our Lord's meaning may receive additional illustration by reference to the word *testament*. A testament is the will of a testator. Let us suppose then a father to make a will containing his bequests to his family, and his directions for the management of his estates. The whole will, however, has reference to his son's coming of age, who is the lawful heir to all his property. The son comes of age, takes possession of the property, according to the provisions of his father's will, ratifies the covenants and conditions made with different parties, and having added a codicil to the old will, embodying many of its provisions, himself departs out of this life into a better. Would it not naturally be supposed, that as the new will was formed upon the basis of the old, and contained in it, that where no special instructions were found, either annulling the provisions of the former covenant, or enacting new, that the old will would be regarded as expressing the son's testamentary intentions? The like seems to be the case between the Old and New Testament.

The Old Testament contains God's injunctions to the Jews, his chosen people, till the "seed should come to whom the promise was made ;

and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator⁵," till He should come, to whom "give all the prophets witness, that, through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins⁶," and in whom all the prophecies were to have their accomplishment. When our Lord comes, He issues various injunctions, some altogether new, some annulling, but many more only extending the precepts of the old law, and giving it additional force and efficacy; as when our Saviour expressly disclaimed any intent of destroying the Old Testament, and expressly declared His purpose to fulfil it, we naturally conclude, not only that the first Testament is the type and representation of the second, but that in many cases where no mention is made of abrogation, and the command or promise of the Old Testament is plain, the former law or promise continues, because it has never been repealed. We are further confirmed in this view by the fact, that the Apostles and early founders of the Church evidently acted upon this impression, continuing the customs of the Jewish Church, when no express directions were given, and adapting them to the altered circumstances of the Christian. This

⁵ Gal. iii. 19.

⁶ Acts x. 43.

will account for what otherwise is an extremely singular part of the New Testament; its almost total silence on some points of perpetual Christian practice, as the Lord's day, and the Baptism of Infants, and the contrast between the minuteness with which the details of Jewish worship are recorded, and the scanty records of the details of Christian worship. With regard, indeed, to the Lord's day, there is a remarkable want of evidence in the New Testament on the subject. There is not, I believe, one single text containing a direct command for the change from the seventh day to the first; nor is there any thing whatever to authorize it, but the perpetual practice of the Christian Church, handed down as we know it to be from the age of the Apostles to our own; founded, as we believe it to be, on their authority, as intimated in a few short hints in the Gospels and Revelation of St. John.

But our surprise ceases when we recollect that the sanctification of one day in seven was an act of God at the creation of the world, and that, as the substance of the moral law which embodied that command is still unrepealed, the command to observe one day in seven is observed, while the authority to alter the day from the first to the seventh is clearly vested in the

Apostles, by the powers with which Christ invested them. So that the seventh day passes into the first with such alterations as are suitable to the greater liberty of the Christian covenant. The general command is unrepealed, the particular strictness of the Jewish ceremonial is abrogated, and that by our Lord Himself. The same remarks apply to the question of Infant Baptism. Infants were by name included as members of the Jewish covenant; unless, therefore, they were by name or by the terms of the Gospel excluded from the Christian covenant, the command to admit them would naturally pass on from the Jewish to the Christian dispensation. And as the Jewish was an exclusive, the Christian an inclusive dispensation; as the terms of the one were much narrower than those of the other; the conclusion is obvious, that infants, who form so large a portion of the human race, ought never to be shut out from the blessings of that Gospel which authorizes all nations to be baptized. In fact, the silence of the New Testament makes for the Baptism of Infants rather than against it. For the Old Testament commands and the New Testament does not forbid—or rather may we not say, that the New Testament takes up what the Old had affirmed in these words, so comforting to every parent's

heart, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not ?."

The relation, then, in which the Old Testament stands to us, as Christians, would seem to be this:—It is an old will, to which a new codicil is attached, repealing some of the provisions of the old, but not all, and explaining or modifying others; and above all, throwing light on the original intentions of the testator, and informing us what his object originally was, though for wise reasons he did not see fit to explain it so fully at first. The new part of the will, (for it is, in fact, but one will,) is of use to explain and enforce the provisions of the old, as well as to put some things in a new light; but we may also say, that the old will is necessary to explain the new, for when the new is silent or deficient, we conclude that the old still has force. The testator is one; the will is one; his objects are one and the same, though at different periods, and under different circumstances, and in relation to different persons.

This view, then, of the relation of the Old Testament to the New will, if I mistake not, help us much in our solution of some difficulties much agitated at the present time.

First. It is a sufficient answer to those who maintain the entire abolition of the moral law, and consequently, to be consistent, of the Old Testament. For there is no reason why the book should be retained and the law abolished. Now according to the view I have unfolded to you, nothing is abolished. All is fulfilled, each part as it is respectively capable of fulfilment. The types are fulfilled in Christ, and in His body the Church. The prophecies are fulfilled and are fulfilling in Christ, and the onward course of Christianity, and its impression on the world. The precepts of the ceremonial law are some of them abrogated by the fulfilment of the types; their spirit is incorporated into the larger system of the Gospel, and the commands of the moral law are fulfilled by our obedience to it. For the notion of moral duties being fulfilled in any way but by obedience, seems to me, I confess, not worth refuting.—Secondly. The view I have taken also supplies an answer to those who think that the Gospel is all spirituality, as they term it, and that there are no forms or rites in religion. Now, to say nothing to the fact that Christ Himself ordained two forms, expressing in each case their perpetuity to the end of the world, in either case connecting them with the Jewish ritual by the very words He used; if the view

I have taken be correct, the Jewish rites will be typical of corresponding leading features of the Christian Church, with the difference that Christians pay more regard to principles and less to minute details, and that we are not taught to expect in Christianity an exact counterpart of the Jewish ceremonial.—Thirdly. This view will also, I think, throw considerable doubt on some of the interpretations of prophecy which are fashionable in our day; those I mean, which speak so certainly of the return of the Jews to their own land, and which predict, with unhesitating boldness, the means which are to bring it about. I would not presume to be positive on the other side; but it is a singular circumstance, that the Old Testament has been taken from the Jews and given over to us; a strong argument, I think, that Jewish prophecies are to be taken in a Christian sense. Had the Jews been obedient, they might possibly have continued in their own land to this day, but having rejected Christ, the whole covenant was changed from a temporal to a spiritual covenant; and being so changed, it would seem as if the prophecies made originally to the Jews, with the temporal conditions annexed to them, were now rather to be interpreted in the larger and Christian sense, not in the original Jewish,

and therefore narrow, explanation of them. And I am confirmed in this view, by the breathless haste with which people seem to determine that prophecy shall be fulfilled in their own way; being well assured, by experience, that uninspired prophets are of all men the least infallible.—Fourthly. I will only make one more remark, that this view suggests very great comfort to those who read the Jewish law and prophets, and see in them by analogy, the state of the Christian Church described, and who, mindful of their own backslidings from God, would fain see in His mercy to the Jews a ray of hope and consolation for themselves. Assuredly the God of the Gospel is not less merciful than the God of the Jew; nor are those who “walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham,” less certain of acceptance than the father of the faithful. These that read in the New Testament, that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life^s,” may surely remember in the Old, “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember

^s John iii. 16.

thy sins⁹." Those that rejoice in the promise of the New Testament, "Who hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost¹," may certainly receive the prophecy of the Old, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you²." Those that find the promise of the New Testament their sure stay in the time of trouble, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy³;" may surely remember the good wine of the former dispensation, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee⁴;" and may recollect the fact as a comment on the prophecy, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God⁵."

⁹ Isa. xliii. 25.¹ Tit. iii. 5.² Ezek. xxvi. 25.³ 1 Pet. iv. 12.⁴ Isa. xliii. 2.⁵ Dan. iii. 25.

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SERMON X.

THE TYPES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, IN
RELATION TO THE NEW.

COLOSSIANS ii. 17.

“Which are a shadow of things to come ; but the body is of Christ.”

It is very remarkable how large a portion both of the Old Testament and of the New may be called typical or symbolical teaching. Persons, rites, places, and things, are selected by God as types or shadows of events to come, in so very marked and peculiar a manner, that we must be perfectly blind if we do not see that this is one principal method of Divine teaching. Thus we have the Apostle Paul's authority for saying, that the whole of the five books of Moses are typical of the Christian dispensation, and are to be understood to have a reference to those better things, which we as Christians enjoy. “Now all these things happened

unto them for ensamples, or types¹." If from the law we pass to the Psalms, we find our Saviour continually applying them in the Christian sense, and giving us a key to unlock the meaning of the whole. Passing on to the prophets, a similar mode of instruction by type and parable presents itself, instruction often ill understood by the hearers, as when the people said to Ezekiel, "Doth he not speak parables?" Thus in the prophet Zechariah, Joshua and Zerubbabel (the one the civil, the other the ecclesiastical governor) are called *typical men*, men of sign or wonder, as it is rendered; persons who were selected to represent by their actions certain great events then future, connected with our Saviour and His Church. But this method of teaching is not confined to the Old Testament; our Lord frequently instructed His hearers in the same manner. It was by parables that He conveyed to His hearers the deepest and most solemn truths of the Christian religion. And in the principal prophecies of the New Testament, more especially in the book of Revelation, the same figurative mode of teaching is kept up, manifestly with a reference to the Old Testament, inasmuch as the figures used are principally borrowed from

¹ 1 Cor. x. 11.² Ezek. xx. 49.

the Old Testament prophets. This then will serve to strengthen the notion which on a former occasion I set before you, of the relation of the Old to the New Testament. I then compared the two Testaments to two wills, or rather to two parts of the same will, made with the same design, but by different persons; and showed, that on the supposition that the second will was made by a son on the basis of the will of his father, adopting it as his own, recognising its validity, and enlarging its provisions; that the natural construction would be, that where the new will did not express itself fully, we should fall back on the provisions of the old. Now the case of the two Testaments seems to be something of this kind. The Old Testament is typical of the New, it refers to events to be fulfilled, to anticipations to be realized, to things yet to come, which had their shadows and images in the New Testament. But as the New Testament does not profess to explain to us all the types and images of the Old, but selects some, apparently as a key to the rest, it would seem to follow that there are many other matters, not plainly spoken of in the New Testament, the key to which is given us in the types and prophecies of the Old. So that the Old Testament (regarded as it may be as one vast type or shadow) is perpetually fulfilling in the

Christian Church, which is, as it were, its proper body; as the shadow which goes before implies a body which is to follow it. And thus the Apostle in the text, who is cautioning the Colossians against returning to the Jewish law, grounds his caution not upon the destruction of the Jewish law, but upon its fulfilment; not upon the fact that a dispensation of a totally different kind had now been introduced, but upon the fact that the new dispensation was the body, the other the shadow,—that the substance of all that had been before was included in it, and included only to give a reality, a body, a new force to that which had been before only indistinct, obscure, and shadowy. The subject for our present consideration may therefore be, the relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament in respect of its types; and the use of those types to us as Christians.

What then is a type? A type is a prophecy, not expressed in words, but in things; a mode of teaching by action instead of expression, like the fingers that wrote upon the wall, which sufficiently indicated what was to follow, even before the writing was written. Typical teaching is like teaching by pictures. It is the representing to the mind's eye what will surely come to pass, and which has an historical event

which corresponds to it. And as we teach a child by pictures what he could not otherwise comprehend, so God taught the world in its infancy by types; and even after the event it is often useful to look back to the picture, and we may derive important instruction by so doing. Thus a person who by studying a picture had gained a perfect notion of the form and figure of a man, would be able the better to identify him when the individual himself stood before him. Again, typical teaching is like the moulding of a statue. The sculptor first conceives the design in his mind, and then works it in the model, from which he afterwards completes the original conception. So the type is a model; it is not the thing itself intended; it is, perhaps, of inferior materials and workmanship, but it is enough to convey the artist's mind, and to show what the whole design will be when it is finished. Thus it is obvious for what purpose types were intended, to enable persons to identify the things so represented when they happened, to assist and strengthen their faith, and to form an evidence similar to that of prophecy, but subordinate to it, to strengthen the faith of succeeding generations. Thus, then, there is this difference between *prophecies* and *types*. Types express by action what prophecies express by speech; the type is the

image which we see, the prophecy the prediction which we hear. Both were given us at the very time of man's creation and fall; (or, rather, type went before the prophecy;) the forming of Eve out of Adam's side being a type of the redemption of the Church by the blood flowing from our Lord's wounded side (as is intimated in the Epistle to the Ephesians), even before man fell; and as soon as man fell, the prophecy of his restoration by the woman's seed in Christ was immediately vouchsafed him. We have thus then considered the general use of types, and their place in the whole scheme of revelation; but we have now further to illustrate the subject, by considering the manner in which they may be said to be fulfilled in the New Testament and in the Christian Church.

One point, then, ought particularly to be noticed and weighed, that all types of the Old Testament may be said to have their fulfilment in Christ and His Church. I say in Christ and the Church, because the Church is always regarded as His body, His spouse, placed in so near and intimate a relation to Him, that whatever He did is for her benefit, whatever He did in some degree belongs to us. Thus even the types which relate to the person of Christ, and which might be supposed to be fulfilled in Him only, belong also

to us as His members. Was He the woman's seed, and as that seed trampled on? Yet "both He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one³," and the Church is in the New Testament called the woman in the wilderness. Did Isaac as a type of Christ submit to bear the wood of the burnt-offering, to be bound and laid on the altar on the wood, while the sacrificing knife was stretched out, and the father took the knife to slay his son? The same type applies to us, and it is remarkable that the very defect of the type in that case, (I mean the fact that Isaac was not sacrificed by his father, whereas Christ was,) only shows its nearer resemblance to us. We as Christians go forth in this world at the command of our Father. God calls for a sacrifice, and we submit to it. We mount up to the hill Moriah, we tread the path of patient self-denial, and yield ourselves to be bound and sacrificed, but the real victim remains behind; the ram caught in the thicket by the horns represents Him who bears our sins away in His own body, and we, as the original Isaac, are let go, and return to our Father's house rejoicing.

Again, did Melchisedeck, king of Salem, the priest of the Most High God, bring forth bread

³ Heb. ii. 11.

and wine and bless Abraham, "returning from the slaughter of the kings?" Not only does that type show forth Christ in the most significant manner as our great High Priest, and His bearing bread and wine, the emblems of His body and blood, to all the faithful of whom Abraham was the first father; but we may also see in it the Christian priesthood, themselves made the ministers of the same elements which Christ blessed, invested by Him with the government of His Church, and by Him expressly sent to convey His blessing to the faithful. Was the ordinance of circumcision made the door of entrance into the Jewish covenant, so that Christ Himself submitted to be circumcised, though He needed it not, for our sakes? He Himself ordained a similar way of entrance into His covenant by a purer rite, that of Baptism, and was Himself baptized that He might connect the two ordinances together, and inspired His Apostles to declare that Baptism was the Christian circumcision, the circumcision made without hands. Was the ordinance of the passover made for all the Jewish people, so that none who refused to eat of it had any right to expect salvation from the plague which smote all the first-born of Egypt? In all this we trace the most minute and

⁴ Heb. vii. 1.

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exact resemblance to the Paschal lamb, the lamb of God, and to the great feast of the Christian Church, emphatically called the Lord's Supper, in commemoration of our great sacrifice. The Paschal lamb was sacrificed, Christ is slain;—the Paschal lamb was eaten, Christ is fed upon;—the Paschal lamb was eaten whole, Christ's body and blood are given, taken, and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper;—the Paschal lamb was not to be eaten by strangers, none but baptized persons must receive the body and blood of Christ;—the Paschal lamb was to be eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, which figures St. Paul himself translates for us into Christian language, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth⁵." The Paschal lamb was to be eaten by persons clothed as pilgrims, and ready to depart; the Lord's Supper is to be partaken of with especial reference to our necessities in the wilderness, and to our preparation for the promised land of everlasting rest. The same kind of typical application may be made to the government as well as to the rites of the

⁵ 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

Jewish law. We have the high-priesthood, the priesthood, and the Levitical ministers, which Clemens, the fellow-labourer of the Apostles, in his epistle to the Corinthian Church, notices as obviously shadowing forth the orders which Christ Himself instituted; the three ranks of bishops, priests, and deacons being evidently recognised in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, after the great High-priest had been withdrawn from the world. In short, the whole history of Israel seems to be one vast type, answering to the constitution of the Christian Church. Sarah and Hagar are an allegory or type of the two covenants of the Law and the Gospel, the one of bondage, the other of spiritual freedom; Jacob and Esau represent, the rejection of the Jews the elder brother, the calling of the Gentiles the younger. Jacob's family going down into Egypt, Christ's journey there, and the darkness out of which Christ's Church is called. Pharaoh and his bloody persecutions, the enmity of Satan and heathen kings against the Christian Church, and the plagues their punishment and discomfiture. The passover represents our redemption; the Red Sea, our Baptism; the Law given from Mount Sinai, by way of contrast answers to the Gospel and Mount Sion; the pillar of fire and of the cloud, to God's providential guidance of the Christian Church; the

wandering in the wilderness, to the subsequent errors, divisions, and fall of the Church of Christ since its first establishment; and their entering into Canaan, to the Church's final triumph.

Then the rites and ceremonies of the Jews, many of them obviously, and probably all in some sense, have relation to us. Their multiplied washings and cleansings terminate in our one Baptism for the remission of sins; their sacrifices, in our great Sacrifice and its commemoration; their incense in our daily prayer; their courses of the priests in the services of our ministry. The very numbers of the Old Testament seem purposely selected in some instances to be types. We find forty days of fasting appointed for Moses, the representative of the law; forty for Elias, the chief of the prophets; forty for our Lord before the temptation; forty for Lent before Easter. We have the number seven occurring singularly often, as a type of the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit. We have twelve tribes, twelve prophets, twelve apostles, and twenty-four elders in the Book of Revelation. We have the bow in the cloud as the sign of God's promise to the new world; and the rainbow round about the throne of God was the sign of promise to the Christian Church. We have the golden candlesticks in the Jewish law, and our Lord

speaking of seven stars and golden candlesticks as the Christian Church in the first chapter of Revelation. We have the high-priest wearing on his breast the names of the twelve tribes; we have Christ bearing on His heart the names of the faithful. We have the ark of the mercy-seat, with the Shechinah, or visible manifestation of the presence of God, in the one covenant; we have the holy table or altar, with the emblems of Christ's passion, and His invisible, yet real and spiritual presence vouchsafed; we have the shewbread in the one, the one loaf in the other; we have Aaron's rod that budded in the one, we have apostolic descent and evangelical fruitfulness in the other; we have Aaron ministering in the Holy of Holies, we have Christ interceding in heaven, and His servants ministering within the rails at the table or altar; in the one we have the vow of the Nazarite, in the Christian Church we have the vow of Baptism. Thus there is scarcely any thing in the Jewish Church which has not its proper antitype in the Christian; not always a thing of the same material kind, nor always a separate rite answering to a Jewish rite; for the Christian ceremonies are fewer, and more simple, and more full than the Jewish; but some rite or doctrine answering to a whole class of Jewish symbols, and expressing them all by its single fulness and

sufficiency. And what was exclusive in them is inclusive in us; what was then narrow, is now large; what was formerly meagre, is now amplified and made wide; what belonged to one nation only, is now intended for the world. They had their separate courts for priests, Israel, women, and Gentiles; we have our one Church, which holds them all; they had their many washings, we our one baptism; they had their numerous sacrifices of divers kinds, we our one Sacrifice and perpetual commemoration. But the time reminds me that I must endeavour to bring to some practical conclusion what I have now said concerning the types of the Old Testament.

This view of the types of the Old Testament is exceedingly comforting and profitable. We see in them, as in a glass, our own wants and woes, and God's mercy in our redemption vividly portrayed. The very number of the types only places the same object before us in a variety of lights, and imparts to every page of the Old Testament additional beauty and interest. We see that the Jewish Church is one Church with our own, that both are parts of the Israel of God, both included in the same covenant of grace, and, as we hope, eventually both to be united in the same redemption. And not only do the types thus show us our interest as Christians in the Old Testament,

and in the people of whom the Old Testament was written, but they strengthen our interest in each other as members of the Church. For they were written for *us*. They were pictures of our own state; models of our Temple; shadows of the body to which we belong. How great a blessing must it be to be engrafted into that Church which was the subject of all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament; for which the world itself was made, and through whose prayers alone it is preserved! Thus, then, let us read the types of the Old Testament with increased discernment of our common portion in them; with increasing thankfulness that our lot is cast in the days of their fulfilment; with diligence and fear, lest we be found unworthy of the benefit. Let us, as we read them, look off from all the world beside unto Him who is the centre in which all these lines of beauty meet; and while we so look unto Him, may we be ourselves transformed into His likeness, that we may see Him as He is!

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SERMON XI.

THE PROMISES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, IN
RELATION TO THE NEW.

GAL. iii. 17.

"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."

THE subject which we considered on Sunday morning last, was the relation which the types of the Old Testament bore to the facts of the New Testament. Let us now, then, speak of the *promises* of the Old Testament compared with those of the New Testament.

And the Apostle in the text teaches us to distinguish between the promises of the Law and the promises of the Gospel. His purpose in this chapter is (which, as appointed for the second lesson for one of the services of the day, it may

be well thus far to explain) to prove to the Jews and Judaizing Christians, that they were in error in wishing to go back to the Jewish law for justification. He argues that the covenant of the law was but an intermediate state between the original promise given to Abraham, and the Gospel which was the fulfilment of that promise; and that so far from the law disannulling, *i. e.* cancelling or making void the original promise respecting Christ our Saviour, it could only be regarded as intended to prepare a way for the accomplishment of that promise, by preserving the Jews as a distinct and separate people till Christ should come in the fulness of time; and that, consequently, to rely on the law in opposition to the Gospel, was not only to frustrate the grace of God, but to overthrow the original promise made to Abraham and his seed, *i. e.* according to the language of the Gospel, to Christ, and all who should tread in the steps of Abraham by believing on Him. So that the Apostle concludes, the law is not against the promises of God, but the law is "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ¹."

We have, on a former occasion, endeavoured practically to illustrate the same argument by

¹ Gal. iii. 24.

showing, that the types of the Old Testament send us on to Christ and the Christian dispensation, and that they are fulfilled both in Him and in His Church, of which we are members. The promises of the Old Testament, then, we are assured in the text, are of a similar kind; their entire fulfilment is to be looked for, not in the Jewish law, nor in the Jewish nation only, but in Christ and His Church. There are, indeed, some which seem to belong to the Jews only as a nation, but even those have a typical and spiritual meaning, and look beyond the existence of the Jews as a separate people, to that time when the fulness of the Gentiles should come in, when there should be no longer "Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all²." So that the promises with the prophecies of the Old Testament are not, as St. Peter tells us, "of private interpretation," not to be applied only to single and separate wants, but to be viewed in connexion with the whole scheme of Divine grace, which embraces both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

It is satisfactory to find that our main argument concerning the correspondence of the Old

² Col. iii. 11.

Testament and the New Testament is so thoroughly Scriptural, and may be depended on; and we may, therefore, the more safely proceed to consider the promises of the Old Testament in the same light. In considering, then, what is properly applicable to ourselves in the Old Testament, and what is not, we should attend to the following distinctions. First, there is a difference between the promises of the Law and the promises of the Gospel, between what belongs more peculiarly, in its primary application, to the Jews, as a nation, and what is catholic or universal in its meaning. Secondly, we must distinguish between the promises to particular persons under peculiar circumstances, and promises which are general, and belong to us and all mankind. Thirdly, we must remember the difference between absolute and conditional promises, between God's absolute will that Christ should be born and die for the salvation of mankind, and His conditional promise to this or that individual that he should be saved.

Let us consider, then, the first of the distinctions which is to be borne in mind in interpreting the promises of the Old Testament, viz. that some belong in their primary application to the Jews as a nation, others are unrestricted and obviously applicable to ourselves. Those promises, then,

are in their literal application to be restricted to the Jews as a nation, which, being found in the law of Moses, are of a directly temporal character. Such are those which promise deliverance from temporal enemies, the Amalekites, the Hittites, and others; those which speak of admittance into the "land flowing with milk and honey," and describe its temporal advantages; those which promise to the obedient that they shall be "blessed in their basket and in their store, in the fruit of their ground, the increase of their kine, and the flocks of their sheep."

So, again, the threatenings to the Jews as a nation cannot be directly and primarily applied to ourselves. We cannot threaten sinners, that if they do not obey God "they shall be smitten before their enemies, that God shall smite them with a fever, and an inflammation, and an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting and mildew; that their ox shall be slain before their eyes, and they shall not eat thereof; and that the fruit of the land, a nation which they know not shall eat up." The Gospel does not make any such direct and immediate temporal promises or threatenings to whole nations and individuals. It informs us that "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God³;" that "all that

³ Acts xiv. 22.

will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution⁴." But at the same time, it does not overthrow the general providential arrangement, that virtue and vice do more or less bring their punishment with them even in this life, only it does not allow us to consider ourselves under the same sort of dispensation with the Jews, in which a direct temporal reward was promised to every act of obedience, but rather bids us look on to those better and brighter hopes, those things "not seen and eternal," which have taken the place of those poor temporal rewards which were promised to the Jews. The reward is not abolished, but delayed; the wages paid to the labourer are gold instead of silver. On the other hand, there are many promises of so heavenly a character, even in the five books of Moses, that we may fairly regard them as intended to belong to us, but they are obviously not confined to the Jews. Such as when it is said of Enoch, that "he was not, for God had translated him;" of Jacob, that "he waited for the salvation of God;" of Abraham, that "his faith was imputed to him for righteousness;" of Moses, that "he found grace in the eyes of the Lord." These, and other such like sayings, are indications of that better, brighter hope which the pious Jew never

⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

lost sight of, though it was comparatively obscure; and we find these glimpses of the perfect day waxing brighter before the day dawned. As we proceed in the Old Testament, the intimations of a future state and of Gospel blessings become clearer, and in the Psalms we have many a promise which belongs clearly to the better times of the Gospel. We find David saying, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption⁵." And again, "as for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness⁶;" and, "my flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever⁷;" and, "the righteous shall have dominion over them in the morning; their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me⁸;" and long before David's time the holy man Job had emphatically declared, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God⁹." As the light of prophecy was lighted in a dark place, "to give light to them that

⁵ Ps. xvi. 10.⁶ Ps. xvii. 15.⁷ Ps. lxxiii. 26.⁸ Ps. xlix. 14, 15.⁹ Job xix. 25, 26.

sat in darkness and in the shadow of death¹," so it burned more brightly as it proceeded. The intimation was more express and full. Thus Isaiah said, speaking of the resurrection of Christ, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise²;" and Hosea declared, "I will redeem them from death³;" and Daniel says, "they shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt⁴." Again, as the time of Christ's birth drew near, it is clear that the promises of the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, were much more dwelt upon, and made prominent and leading features in the preaching of the Old Testament prophets. The law speaks of obedience, but dwells little on forgiveness, and though now and then we find a single passage or two, such as that in the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus, "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, I also will remember My covenant which I made with Jacob, and I will not cast them away to destroy them utterly,"—yet the general tenor of the law is forbidding; it is Mount Sinai, the "mount which gendereth to bondage⁵," not Mount Zion, with its "innumerable company of angels, and Jesus the Mediator of the new cove-

¹ Ps. cvii. 10.² Isa. xxvi. 19.³ Hos. xiii. 14.⁴ Dan. xii. 2.⁵ Gal. iv. 24.

nant⁶." But the language of the prophets is, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you⁷;" "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price⁸;" "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water⁹;" "I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thy offspring¹;" "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away²;" "from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh³;" "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive⁴;" "only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast

⁶ Heb. xii. 22, 24.⁷ Isa. li. 12.⁸ Isa. lv. 1.⁹ Isa. xli. 18.¹ Isa. xliv. 3.² Isa. li. 11.³ Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.⁴ Ezek. xviii. 27.

scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed My voice, saith the Lord⁵;" "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings⁶;" "I will betroth thee to Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord⁷." These, and numberless other passages which would occupy too much time in the quotation, but which are the stay and comfort of every sincere Christian, are obviously promises intended for us, for two reasons. First, many of them occur in the midst of prophecies which speak directly of Christ our Saviour; so that if we refuse to admit that the promise is applicable to ourselves, we can hardly admit the application of the promises of the Gospel at all. Such are particularly the prophecies of Isaiah, in the fortieth and following chapters of his book. Secondly, the promises are so expressed, in such general terms, and are so very comprehensive, and there is so little that is narrowed (as it were) to the peculiar circumstances of the Jew, that it seems doing violence to Holy Scripture to suppose that they are meant for Jews only. They

⁵ Jer. iii. 13.⁶ Jer. iii. 22.⁷ Hos. ii. 19, 20.

seem rather to describe that willingness to show mercy and pity on the part of the Almighty, which is surely as great under the Gospel dispensation as it could ever be under the Law ; and which is, in fact, far more fully and gloriously displayed.

What then becomes, it may be asked, of those promises which, in their primary sense, belong exclusively to the Jews ; such as those temporal blessings promised to particular acts of obedience ? I answer, we must be very cautious about applying such to ourselves, and especially that we do not apply them as the Jews did, because we have no warrant for so doing. It was the fashion in the times of the great rebellion thus to apply all the promises of the Law ; and a great mistake it was. If the king was to be murdered, it was Amalek who was to be rooted out ; if a church was to be plundered, the Canaanites were to be smitten, or the walls of Jericho to fall down flat. "Up, and slay them^s," was a favourite text, borrowed from the mouth of Gideon, and interpreted to mean, that loyal subjects were to be cut to pieces, or clergy were to be turned out of doors, their livings sequestered, and their families left to starve. Thus there is no kind of wickedness which may not be justified by this

^s Judges viii. 20.

fanatical misinterpretation of the Old Testament. But we must have a Divine warrant for exterminating, before we can apply the sentence of extermination; our warrant is to bless, not to curse; to love, not to hate and revile; to pray, not to persecute.

In what sense, then, are we to apply the passages to ourselves? I answer, in a spiritual sense. The promises and threatenings of the Law, like the types of the Law, are transferred to the Gospel. The nations of Canaan, as regards us, are our spiritual foes, the devil and his angels, and the lusts and wickedness of the world; the land of promise is to us that good and glorious land of Paradise to which we hasten, that place of peace, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest⁹."

The command to save alive nothing that breathed, is directed against the lusts that war in our members, which are to be destroyed; the promises of blessing are those which our Lord gives His people in the sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do

⁹ Job iii. 17

hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you¹." And thus the Gospel is a covenant "established upon better promises;" better in their object, better in the *means of accomplishing it*, better in their *endurance* and *everlasting stability*.

We have considered, then, one of the *distinctions*, viz. that between the promises made to the Jews as a nation, and between that which is catholic or universal in its meaning.

Secondly, let us apply the same caution to those promises made to individuals under peculiar circumstances.

We cannot infer, that because Noah was saved

¹ Matt. v. 3—12.

in the ark, while the world was destroyed, that we ourselves, although upright before God, should escape the calamity of a flood or pestilence in which others are involved; nor can we conclude, because God said He would build David's house as a reward of his zeal for the God of Hosts, that we ourselves shall be conspicuous for our family honour or wealth; nor ought we to infer, that because Solomon, when he asked for an understanding heart, was rewarded with wisdom, that we shall be blessed with wisdom above all the rest of mankind. These are peculiar instances, not intended for general rules; a general rule, however, may be drawn from them, which is this,—that God will certainly reward us for our obedience to His commandments; though the particular manner of His doing so must be left to His wisdom to decide upon. At the same time, when we read in the Book of Proverbs, (a book obviously intended as a treasury of maxims of profound wisdom, not for the Jews only, but for the world,) we can hardly help concluding, that even in this life godliness has a promise, has a reward, though it has not all its reward. The better part is to come, but the earnest is not wanting: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold

upon her : and happy is every one that retaineth her²."

But we proceed to the third and last distinction, and a very important one it is, between absolute and conditional promises. We cannot argue from God's absolute promise of eternal life in Christ, to the absolute salvation of particular persons. God absolutely determined that Christ should be born, suffer, and die for the salvation of mankind, and that all those who believe in Him and obey Him shall be saved ; but we no where read that He has determined that this or that person shall be saved. God made an absolute promise that Israel should enter the promised land, and He made it before the Israelites quitted Egypt, yet only two of that generation really entered it ; the rest fell in the wilderness. Yet there was no unfaithfulness in God. The promise was absolute as to the event of their entrance into Canaan, and conditional as to the persons of whom Israel was composed. They were disobedient, and so fell, and their children enjoyed the promise. The same sort of conditional promise seems to me to apply to all God's dealings with the Jews. There are many very strong assurances of their restoration to their own land. Partially they were restored ;

² Prov. iii. 17, 18.

and, had the people been obedient, God would have fulfilled His promise to the letter: but they were disobedient, and so the covenant was changed; and, after the crucifixion of Christ, the Lord of Glory, the whole promise was changed, and turned into a spiritual promise to the true Israel of God. And you will find, that though there are several intimations of the conversion of the Jews, there is not a word in the New Testament, that I know of, which intimates their return now to their own land as a nation. This silence is remarkable, because it seems to strengthen the view I have been proposing. The conversion of Israel seems an absolute promise: "God hath concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all³." The restoration of the Jewish nation to temporal privileges was a conditional promise, and is not renewed under the charter of the New Testament dispensation. If it be objected, that this notion of conditional promises leaves us, after all, in a state of painful doubt and uncertainty; I answer, that the objection goes further, and applies to the whole state of trial and probation in which God's providence has placed us, and which must be, as long as it continues, a state of uncertainty, although of hope.

³ Rom. xi. 32.

Trial and moral discipline are "not joyous, but grievous;" and to see "through a glass darkly," is to strain our eyes after what is only imperfectly and at a distance discerned: but the question is not, why are we here? but, what is our great business here? If all doubts were cleared up, where were our trial? If all uncertainty were gone, how could we "see through a glass darkly?" So that if we object at all to conditional promises, we must object to the whole scheme of revelation at once; not only of revelation, but of providence; we must, as it seems to me, cease to be believers, which God forbid.

We arrive, then, at the following conclusions respecting the promises of the Old Testament:—First, they may be received by us, and thankfully enjoyed, with these cautions and limitations,—that we do not apply to ourselves those things which belong solely to the Jews as a nation, or that if we apply them, it be done in a Gospel, not in a Jewish sense; spiritually, not carnally. Secondly, that we do not apply to all what was only meant to individuals under peculiar circumstances. Thirdly, that we remember that our own faith, patience, and charity are essential qualifications for our enjoyment of the comfort and security of the Old Testament promises. Fourthly, we may rejoice to find in the Old Testament

intimations of every article of the faith which we profess. The doctrines of the fall of man, of our redemption by Christ, of His Divine nature, incarnation, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession; of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead; of the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting; are all partially, though not fully, revealed in the Old Testament, and progressively revealed; the light breaking in upon the world as the light of the rising sun leaps from one hill-top to another, until at last hills and valleys alike shine out in the full light of day. Lastly, we may rejoice with greater joy in the abundance of the revelation of the New Testament. There we have promises sufficient to cheer, and restore, and comfort us in our pilgrimage through life; we have precepts sufficient to guide us in our perplexed and difficult path; we have examples sufficient to encourage us when we are faint and weak-hearted, that we may follow the footsteps of those of whom "the world was not worthy." And thus, by attending to the promises as the voice of invitation, to the precepts as the voice of authority, and to the examples as the voice of sympathy and warning, we shall attain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

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SERMON XII.

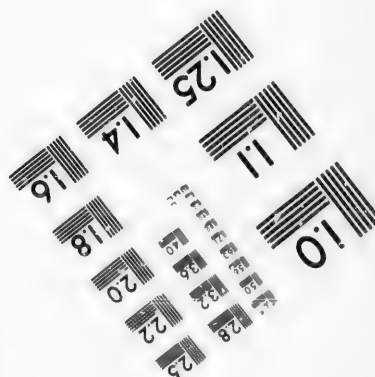
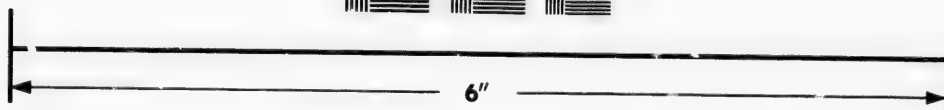
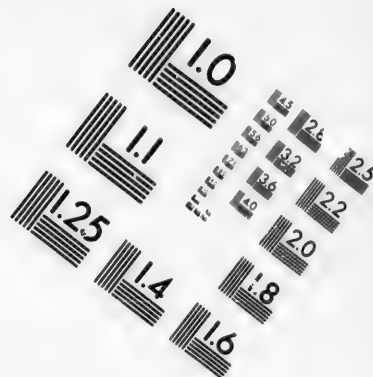
THE PRECEPTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, IN
THEIR RELATION TO THE NEW.

PSALM cxix. 97—105.

“O how love I Thy law ! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies : for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers : for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy word. I have not departed from Thy judgments : for Thou hast taught me. How sweet are Thy words unto my taste ! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth ! Through Thy precepts I get understanding : therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

THESE words demand our particular attention, because they throw great light on the subject we have been considering for several Sundays, the relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament. We have considered that relation in





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respect of the *types* and the *promises* of the Old Testament. We have now to consider it in respect of its *precepts*. And the words of the Psalmist demand our attention, as I have said, because they show us the importance not only of the Old Testament as a whole, but of a small part of the Old Testament, the five books of Moses. For the Psalmist wrote before any of the prophets, except Samuel, had been inspired to prophesy; he wrote when scarcely any part of the Old Testament, except the five books of Moses, and perhaps the book of Job, were in existence. So that it is of those few books, and of none else, that he uses the glowing expressions which I have just read, and will now repeat again. "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy word. I have not departed from Thy judgments: for Thou hast taught me. How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false

way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." These are not the words, my brethren, of one who thought the Old Testament and the law of Moses a fable, or a tale, or a compilation of ceremonies with which the world has little to do. It is true, they are the words of a Jew, and as such, bound to the Jewish law with a fervent love, which, it is to be feared, few of us feel even for the whole Bible, the Old and New Testaments; but they are the words of a Jew inspired, and that by the Holy Ghost Himself. They are the words of one who had found the way of salvation in those scanty records which some affect to despise; they are the words of one who declares, that in danger and in war, at home and abroad, by day and by night, in the stillness of the chamber and at the council-board of his kingdom, he had made these precepts his study, and was not ashamed to say of them, that they were a "lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path."

Nay, he holds the same language in Psalm xix.; he there declares, that what was sufficient for himself is sufficient also for others, and that the law (or precepts of the Old Testament) was able to "convert the soul, to make wise the simple, to enlighten the eyes, to rejoice the heart." Many other passages might be brought forward, were it

necessary, but I shall refer only to two in the New Testament. The one occurs in the second lesson for the day, where our Lord, being asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" answers, "What is written in the law¹?" an answer which He would not have made, had He intended at once to repeal, annul, and make void the precepts of the Old Testament. And the other passage I would quote is one probably familiar to most of you, in which St. Paul says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness²;" and by the expression, "*all* Scripture," we know he must have intended to include the Old Testament, because the volume of the New Testament was not then completed. So that we may safely come to the conclusion, that the precepts of the Old Testament are in many cases binding upon us, in all instances profitable for us, and profitable even when not binding. Indeed, the very solemn declaration of our Lord at the beginning of His ministry, warns us not to despise the precepts of the Old Testament; "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil³."

¹ Luke x. 25, 26.² 2 Tim. iii. 16.³ Matt. v. 17.

The precepts of the Old Testament are usually divided into three classes,—ceremonial, judicial, and moral.

By *ceremonial precepts*, we understand the rites and ceremonies which belong more properly to the Jewish Church, but which are as a whole typical of the Christian, and their place supplied in some instances with corresponding rites in the Christian religion.

By *judicial precepts*, we mean the code of the Jewish nation relating to civil government, which was given by Moses as the civil governor, immediately after the law of the ten commandments was delivered from Mount Sinai, and which we find in the books of Exodus and Leviticus.

And by *moral precepts*, we mean the ten commandments, and all those precepts which may be considered as illustrating and enforcing them.

In reference, then, to the first, the ceremonial law, it seems that it is not binding on us Christians as a law, by the very words of our Saviour, in which He says, "I come not to destroy, but to fulfil;" for if it be fulfilled, it is not now binding. And we have several express testimonies in the New Testament to the fact, that the ceremonial law no longer binds us as Christians. "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of a new moon, or of a Sabbath-

day⁴:" *i. e.* Jewish ordinances are now, by the new covenant, abolished and done away. And the very terms—of the abolition of the old covenant and making a new—imply that the ceremonial law would be dispensed with. That the ceremonies then, as such, are not binding on a Christian's conscience is clear, but they are profitable, though not binding. For in them, as in a glass, we see reflected clearly the whole Christian scheme. In the ceremonial law we see the need of our redemption, the misery and defilement of our nature, the person, office, and character of our Redeemer, and many significant emblems of the rites ordained by Christ Himself, and by His authority practised in the Christian Church. This I have shown at length in considering the types. If, then, the ceremonial law be abolished, is a Christian man left, under the Christian dispensation, at liberty to frame ceremonies for himself, to be his own lawgiver, his own ruler, his own judge, so that every man may "do that which is right in his own eyes?" By no means. The power which formerly belonged to the Jewish Church, by Divine right, of ordering the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion, is by our Saviour conferred upon the Christian. It is Christ who gave His Apostles

⁴ Col. iii. 16.

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power to retain and remit, to bind and loose, to admit or reject from communion, and if He bestowed these greater powers, much more hath the Church power to decree rites and ceremonies. But this matter a passage from St. Paul will effectually settle. There was a dispute among the Corinthian Christians about what might seem a trifling matter,—the wearing long hair. The Apostle, after reproving them for not attending to the custom of nature, which would have taught them what was right, ended thus: "But if any man seem to be contentious," if any man still persist in his opposition to what is seemly and natural in itself, what then?—let him have his custom to himself?—no, but tell him this, "we have no such custom, neither the Church of God^s." Let this be sufficient to stop his cavillings, the custom of the Church is otherwise; and thus he ends the matter.

There are two of the Thirty-nine Articles which are very clear and decisive upon the point. The first is the twentieth: "The Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." Now she could not have the power, unless it were given her of God. And the other is the thirty-fourth,—

^s 1 Cor. xi. 16.

“Whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like.” Thus we see, first, in respect of the ceremonies of the Jewish law, that they are abolished and taken away; secondly, they are typical of certain rites in the Christian Church; thirdly, the power to ordain, change, and abolish rites and ceremonies lies not in each man’s private judgment, but in the whole Church. I may add, that we must take care not to confound (as many do) the Sacraments with the ceremonies of the Church. The two Sacraments were ordained by Christ Himself for everlasting memorials, and means of grace; and the Church has no power to abolish or alter them; though, with regard to the external circumstances of her ritual, she has the power; and we may observe also, that in exercising this power the Church has exhibited her usual discretion, by steering between the two extremes—of Romanism on the one hand, and dissent on the other.

“It has ever been the wisdom of the Church of England,” (say the compilers of our Prayer-book, in the preface to the Liturgy), “to keep the

mean between the two extremes." And again, in regard to the observation of ceremonies,—
 "and although the keeping or omitting of a ceremony, in itself considered, is but a small thing;"
 "yet, so that the main body and essentials of it, (as well in the chiefest materials, as in the frame and order thereof), have still continued the same unto this day."

Let so much, then, be said for the ceremonial law. We proceed to the *judicial* law, or the code of the Israelites, as a nation. And this, too, seems not to be binding on us as a nation, with the exception of those points of natural equity and justice, which are the foundation of all laws, and are therefore incorporated into our own. Such, for example, is the law of intermarriages with kindred, from which our table of degrees of affinity is taken; a table which is thus sanctioned by God Himself, and which cannot be changed or altered without great moral injury to the nation which so alters it. And, indeed, England has no reason to go to foreign nations to learn her moral duties. The manners of foreigners are no recommendation to a change of the law, and those are the worst enemies of their country who would recommend it⁶.

⁶ It is not unworthy of observation, that the judicial law of

There are, again, many other points of interest in the judicial law of Moses, the spirit of which must be preserved in all good laws. The remarkable tenderness enjoined towards servants, at that time so inhumanly treated, the kindness even towards cattle, the prohibition of cruelty in various injunctions, the precept to love our neighbour as ourselves, the laws respecting infliction of injuries, theft, and manslaughter; all indicate the merciful source from whence they spring, especially if we compare them with the institutions of some of the most free and enlightened nations of antiquity. How superior must they have been then to the laws (if any such there were) of the Canaanitish nations!

But there is a third class of the precepts of the Old Testament—the *moral*; and we may observe, that this constitutes by far the largest part of the volume. For, dividing the Old Testament into two parts; first, what more strictly and literally relates to the Jews as a nation, either to the rites and ceremonies of their religion, or to their government, as a state; and, secondly, what relates to the whole human race, though primarily spoken to the Jews or the patriarchs; we see how much is of this latter kind, and not of the former.

Moses was incorporated into the English statute law by King Alfred.

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How little of the Old Testament is occupied with Jewish rites only! How much, for example, is spent in biographies and histories,—of all modes of instruction the most interesting! How large a portion in a manual of devotion for all nations in the Psalms, and in maxims for general conduct in the Proverbs! And of the writings of the prophets, a great part obviously belongs to Gospel times, and consequently to us. So that if we except a few chapters in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, there is scarcely any thing else which is not as necessary and profitable for us as it was for the Jews; in one sense more so, because we have not only the precept itself, but we have experience to assist us in interpreting it, and the example of others as a warning to ourselves. And indeed our Lord by His quotations from the Old Testament, shows in what light its precepts are to be regarded by us. On one occasion, when His disciples were accused by some hypocritical Pharisees for taking so much liberty on the Sabbath-day as to take a walk in the corn-fields, and to pluck the ears of corn as they went along, He vindicated that liberty by observing, that had they known what that meant, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice⁷,” they would not

⁷ Matt. xii. 7.

have condemned the guiltless. Now that passage came from Hosea⁸, and the prophet was not speaking of the same subject, but our Lord applied it as a principle, showing how widely the precepts of the Old Testament extend, and with what veneration they are to be received by us.

Again, St. Paul, in the ninth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, speaking of the claim which ministers of the Gospel have of a due maintenance, uses the argument, "Say I these things as a man," *i. e.* by mere human reasoning, irrespective of revelation, "or saith not the law the same also?" You observe, he was writing to Gentiles, and yet he lays stress upon the law: "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope⁹." So that the whole argument of the Apostle turns on the spiritual meaning of this law of Moses, which he applies to the times of the Gospel, intimating, that if

⁸ Hosea vi. 6.

⁹ 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10.

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such a law were made for the benefit of beasts, much more should it be applied to Christ's ambassadors.

And, again, in the writings of the prophets, what can be more instructive than the precepts of Isaiah? what more suitable for the penitent than the Lamentations of Jeremiah over Israel? what more encouraging to the young than the history of Daniel? what more alarming to the sinner than the writings of the lesser prophets? For, even in their prophecy of the future, they were also inspired to dwell upon those great moral truths which concern men in every age, as a sinner needing a Saviour, seeking the pardon of sin, and deliverance from its power, and learning, by God's grace, to rid himself of its yoke altogether. So that, from the view of Old Testament *types, promises, and precepts*, we may gather this truth, that every part of the Old Testament has its proper use, if we read it aright. The *ceremonial part*, in its witness to Christ and to the Christian Church, as the proper guide to the ceremonies which belong to the Christian dispensation; the *judicial law*, in the equity of its precepts, and in the spirit which is incorporated in the laws of Christian states, and ought to direct the actions of Christian men; and the *moral part*, making up by far the larger part of the Old

Testament, serving as a guide of our actions, an accuser of our sins, a handmaid to direct us to Christ, a rule of life when we are in the way, an example of that obedience which we all ought to follow. And, together with this, the biography of the Old Testament has its use; the lives of the good and the evil serving for imitation or for warning, or sometimes for both in the same person; the end being justifiable, but the means taken to bring about that end wholly, or in part, unjustifiable.

Practically, then, we may gather,—First, that the moral and preceptive part of the Old Testament, apart from the ceremonial and judicial law of the Jews, is intended for our obedience; and that, unless there be in the command something which is abolished by the Gospel dispensation, or fulfilled in some other way, we are bound to obey it; and that even where the particular act enjoined is not binding on us, the spirit of that act is absolutely binding.

Thus, to name two or three cases as examples :—It is not incumbent on us to put to death profligate idolaters; but the spirit of that obedience is binding on us, the obedience which shrinks from no command of God, however painful, and which wages war against the lusts that “war in our members.”

Again, David was commanded to rear an "altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite," and he refused to offer unto the Lord of that "which had cost him nothing¹;" and his heart smote him when he remembered that he dwelt "in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelt within curtains²." The principle to be extracted from the act of David is obvious, and one of everlasting importance, that we must give to God of the best of what we have, and that to build a house to Him of mean materials, in a poor, beggarly manner, and spend all our incomes in making our own houses as comfortable as possible, is to mock God and condemn ourselves.

So, again, the act of Solomon, in magnificently furnishing the temple, accompanied as it was by the direct blessing and remarkable presence of God, which could not have been unless He approved it, and, further, by the explicit promise, "In this place will I give peace³," supplies us with a principle of a similar kind, that, without copying all the measurements of Solomon's temple, we should copy Solomon's largeness of heart, and love for the service of God. Where people have no money at all to give, God may be wor-

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv. 18. 24.² 2 Sam. vii. 2.³ Hag. ii. 9.

shipped in a barn as well as in a temple; but where they have money, but prudently keep it all to themselves, we read in the New Testament, not in the Old, that "they who sow little shall reap little, and they that sow plenteously shall reap plenteously⁴." Only we must distinguish in all these cases, between that which is the act of the individual, and has no precept or promise to support it, and that which, as in David's case, has the promise, "Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee⁵;" and the act of Solomon was even the subject of a prophecy, "He shall build a house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever⁶."

I may, also, in reference to the precepts of the Old Testament, repeat the remark made before, of the progressive character of its commands. The Old Testament intimates, but the New Testament enlarges and expands, gives to the shadow its body, gives to the command its *motive* and *extent*. And of this we have a striking instance in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. The precept, "Thou shalt not kill," was in the Old Testament, but its true meaning was to be explained in the New. The command, "Thou shalt love

⁴ 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7.⁵ 2 Sam. vii. 3.⁶ 2 Sam. vii. 13.

thy neighbour as thyself," was in the Old Testament; but it is our Lord who tells us who is our neighbour, and what is to be the extent of that love which we are to bear to him. And if this be so with the precepts of the Old Testament, much more with its examples, the infirmity of man never coming up to the standard of the Divine law, and in almost every human example there being something to shun as well as to imitate.

On the whole, I think the subject we have here considered, may teach us the necessity of greater reverence and caution in reading, quoting, and handling the Old Testament; of greater diligence in searching it according to Christ's command; and, above all, of more earnest prayer, that He, who indited it for our instruction, may mercifully keep us from slighting or underrating any, even the least portion of it, and not lay upon us any of those awful plagues which belong to those who add to or diminish aught from the Word of God. This prayer we cannot possibly express better, perhaps not so well, as in the Collect of our Church. "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest

them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen⁷."

⁷ Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent.

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SERMON XIII.

AN ADVENT SERMON.

2 TIM. iv. 1.

“Who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.”

A VAST number of persons are very prone to forget, and very unwilling to hear of, the subject of the last judgment. That very wicked people should be unwilling to hear of it, is not surprising; for their deeds condemn themselves; no man who loves darkness and deeds of darkness can be willing to come to the light, and to behold the blaze of that light which no man hath seen nor (while he lives in the flesh) can see. But it is not the very wicked only who try to put it away from them. Careless, slumbering Christians, self-righteous and self-deluded professors, and even persons of better minds, but mistaken views, too often

shun the appalling thought. A fearful thought, indeed, it must be to every one of us; for how can mortal flesh bear to behold God even as the Son of man without exceeding fear and dread? But what makes most persons wish to put the subject from them is this. Men love to be at ease, and dislike anything which gives them any trouble; more especially, when they have long since pursued habits of self-indulgence in one way or another, they particularly dislike any doctrine which reminds them of their danger, which shakes off their easy, quiet slumbers, which awakens them to a painful sense of perpetual responsibility, which would force them to feel that they must give account of every deed they perform, every word they utter, every thought they imagine. They have been so little in the habit of self-examination, and so long accustomed to regard themselves as safe, that they cannot bear to be called to account. The very notion of a judgment to come, contradicts all their established notions, all the usages and habits of the circle in which they move. Accustomed to spend their time in habits of business or leisure (as the case may be), and to devote that leisure to any amusement which may be in fashion, the notion of a judgment is one of the last which crosses their minds. How shocking it would be to speak of such a

subject in the festivities and pleasures of the world! And so life rolls on; and though one and another are called away, yet the world misses them not; others occupy their places, the giddy dance continues, and the judgment is forgotten! It is true they say in the Creed, "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead;" it is true they pray in the Liturgy, "In the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us;" and they hear occasional reference to the subject from the pulpit, but these things are soon forgotten, when custom and fashion put religion out of countenance. And even preachers are often found to suit their doctrines to the palate of their hearers, and forbear to urge what is so much less pleasing than the comfortable doctrine of assurance, or the not less pleasing hope, that if all the congregation are not among the elect, at all events some are, and they therefore have no cause to fear. And so each man hopes for himself and fears for his neighbour. Whereas, the Scripture doctrine is, hope for others, fear for yourselves. "Who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." It is astonishing what a multitude of references there are in Scripture to the last judgment. Enoch, we are told, only the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold the Lord

cometh with ten thousand of His saints¹.” The Psalms of David are full of declarations to the same effect: “God is a righteous Judge, strong and patient; and God is provoked every day. If a man will not turn, He will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow and made it ready².” “Arise, Thou Judge of the world; and reward the proud after their deserving³.” “The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord’s seat is in heaven. His eyes consider the poor; and His eye-lids try the children of men. Upon the ungodly He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall be their portion to drink⁴.” “The Lord hath prepared His seat in heaven; and His kingdom ruleth over all⁵.” “With righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity⁶.” “The earth trembled, and was still, when God arose to judgment, and to help all the meek upon earth⁷.” “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: there shall go before Him a consuming fire, and a mighty tempest shall be stirred up round about Him. He shall call the heaven from above, and the earth, that He may judge His people⁸.” “He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth; and with

¹ Jude 14.² Ps. vii. 12, 13.³ Ps. xciv. 2.⁴ Ps. xi. 4, 5, 7.⁵ Ps. ciii. 19.⁶ Ps. xcviii. 10.⁷ Ps. lxxvi. 8, 9.⁸ Ps. l. 3, 4.

righteousness to judge the world, and the people with His truth⁹."

The prophets abound with majestic descriptions of Jehovah coming to judgment. "In that day," says Isaiah, "shall a man cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth¹." "They shall say," says Hosea, "to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us²." "He shall sit," says Malachi, "as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap³." And one of the boldest and most magnificent images in the Old Testament is found in the prophet Habakkuk, when describing the Almighty coming to judgment at Mount Sinai as a type of the last day;—"God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount

⁹ Ps. xevi. 13.

¹ Isa. ii. 20, 21.

² Hosea x. 8.

³ Mal. iii. 2, 3.

Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power. Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet. He stood and measured the earth: He beheld and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: His ways are everlasting ⁴."

Can we forget the frequent references of our Saviour to the same subject? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation ⁵." Several of our Lord's parables, as that of the talents, the ten virgins, the unjust judge, the two debtors—all have reference to the same subject, and from one of them He passes on immediately to the declaration, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His

⁴ Hab. iii. 3—6.

⁵ John v. 25. 29.

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glory : and before Him shall be gathered all nations⁶."

The subject of the last judgment occupied a prominent part of the preaching of the Apostles. St. Peter speaks of it in his second Epistle⁷. St. Paul declared it to the polished Athenians⁸, and to the hard-hearted Jews⁹; St. John writes of it in his epistles of love¹. St. Paul is perpetually alluding to it. In his epistles we find these sentences:—"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ²;" "for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ³." "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is⁴." "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad⁵." "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first⁶." "The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick

⁶ Matt. xxv. 31, 32. See also to the end of the chapter.

⁷ 2 Pet. iii. 7—12.

⁸ Acts xvii. 31.

⁹ Heb. ix. 27, 28.

¹ 1 John iv. 17.

² Rom. ii. 16.

³ Rom. xiv. 10.

⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 13.

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 10.

⁶ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom⁷.” “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries⁸.” “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it⁹.” “Serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire¹.”

St. Peter and St. Jude dwell at length on the same subject:—“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up².” “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him³.” And one of the last verses in the Bible says, “Behold, I come quickly; and

⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 1.

⁸ Heb. iv. 1.

² 2 Pet. iii. 10.

⁸ Heb. x. 26, 27.

¹ Heb. xii. 28, 29.

³ Jude 14, 15.

My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be ⁴."

Thus, so far from our preaching on the last judgment being not to preach the Gospel; we cannot preach the Gospel at all if we do not often speak of it, inasmuch as it forms so large a part of Gospel truth and apostolic teaching; and it is remarkable that the Apostle, in two places, when speaking of the last judgment, adds, "according to my Gospel."

The text, then, speaks of four things:—first, the Judge; secondly, the act of judgment; thirdly, the persons on whom pronounced; fourthly, the time.

The Judge is our Lord Jesus Christ, for judgment belongs to the Mediator of men, Christ Jesus. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man ⁵." And why is it said, "because He is the Son of man?" We may suppose that this is done on several accounts: first, if we are to be judged of things done in the body, it has been well said, who can be so fit a judge of them, who so competent to temper justice with mercy, and exactly discriminate between

⁴ Rev. xxii. 12.

⁵ John v. 22. 27.

the real and the apparent in human actions, as He, who, "though He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"⁶?" To whom could we commit our cause with so much confidence as to the Saviour, who, though He be an impartial judge, is still the sinner's friend? All that can be alleged on our behalf will be admitted by One who was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin"⁷." Secondly, it seems fitting that Christ should be the Judge, to show the glory of His Godhead, as well as the truth of His manhood. For though it is said, that God will "judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained"⁸;" yet nothing is more certain than that God will be the Judge. Indeed, the Bible so often and so plainly tells this, that no other truth is declared with more fulness and assurance. "God is the judge," says the Psalmist, "He putteth down one, and setteth up another"⁹." "God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts"¹," says the Apostle Paul. Indeed, who but God can? or who but a divine person can judge mankind righteously? Thirdly, the committing judgment to the Son,

⁶ Phil. ii. 6, 7.⁷ Heb. iv. 15.⁸ Acts xvii. 31.⁹ Ps. lxxv. 7.¹ Rom. ii. 16.

seems proper to vindicate the insulted majesty of the Son of God when on earth. Therefore, when our Saviour stood before Caiaphas and the council, and they adjured Him, required Him, under the solemn sanction of an oath, to tell them whether He were the Christ; He answered, "I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven²." Now it was on this answer that they proceeded to pass sentence upon their future Judge. So crooked and perverse is human judgment. The very Judge of all, Himself was arraigned at the bar of human justice, pronounced guilty without evidence, and even against it, and condemned as a blasphemer, for asserting the prerogative of His office. Where will these men hide their guilty heads, who blasphemously railed, insulted, and crucified Him? And what emphasis does such a scene give to the words of the prophet, "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings³;" "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of⁴?"

But the text speaks, secondly, *of the act of judgment*. A vast number of qualities and perfections belong to the act, which none but God can exercise. That accurate discerning of spirits which

² Mark xiv. 62.³ Isa. li. 7.⁴ Ibid. ii. 22.

will enable Him to separate men one from another, as "a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats," reading instantaneously their whole character and history, their talents, opportunities, privileges, desires, hopes, motives; the discovery of each separate action in the whole life, and the pourtraying it before the conscience, just as the picture which is now taken by the help of the rays of the sun, contains in miniature all the lines (how many soever they be) of the whole countenance; the attaching to each action and thought its proper motive, and assigning to mixed motives their proper place; the separating individuals from classes among whom found, and giving them their proper place; and the summing up with right, but merciful exactness, the entire character of the whole man, and this in the case of all mankind; what a tremendous work is this, how impossible to be performed by any but by God! Let us remember, then, the principle on which this sentence will proceed; "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil^s." When, then, our

^s Rom. ii. 7—9.

Saviour, in the 25th of St. Matthew, mentions love to the brethren as the sole ground on which the final reward is to be made, He does it, not surely to exclude any of the graces which St. Paul here mentions, but inasmuch as love is the fulfilling of the law, the parent and progenitor of all the rest.

Thirdly, the persons. The quick and the dead—the quick, who shall be alive at that awful day—the dead, who shall rise from their graves; all mankind included, none exempt.

Now surely this is one of the facts of that last day which we should most often think upon in our closets. “Commune,” says the Psalmist, “with your own heart upon your bed, and be still⁶.” We should remember, that we shall all be there and be judged; high and low, rich and poor, one with another; and that as none of us will be able to “redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him⁷,” so we still all have to answer for our own individual acts. Is there not something in these thoughts which should prevent us from setting up as judges of our brethren? which should check proud or ill-natured censures, provoking comparisons, uncharitable imputations, bitter and hasty quarrels, and, above all, malice and revenge? For we shall each be judged.

⁶ Ps. iv. 4.

⁷ Ibid. xlix. 7.

How unspeakably awful is the thought of a sentence for *eternity*! A sentence so just, that we cannot accuse it: so exact, that we cannot evade it: which, when once pronounced, no intreaties, no lamentations, no repentance, can possibly change or recall. All the accompaniments of that day are awful. The surprise (for it will come suddenly), the whole universe shaken to pieces, the elements melting away, the true characters of all men at once appearing, the sight of the angels who ministered to, and the devils who tempted us, the thought of all things that ever we did, the expectation of the endless life to come, the consciousness of the nothingness of human fears and hopes and joys, the sight of our Judge;—surely, if some supernatural comfort were not vouchsafed us amidst these terrors, what heart could endure? That such peace will be granted to sincere Christians may be inferred from several passages of Holy Writ. I name but two. One in the prophet Isaiah, which seems to apply to the last day: “It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation^s,” the other in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, “When He shall

^s Isa. xxv. 9.

come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, (because our testimony among you was believed,) in that day⁹." We cannot but think that these passages imply that a special gift of peace and hope shall be vouchsafed to those who have trusted in the Saviour; and if such grace be necessary to support the righteous, what will be the fear of those who have it not?

There remains one more point, *the time* of His appearing and His kingdom, *i. e.* when He shall appear to take possession of His kingdom, when the words shall be fulfilled which say, "*Thy kingdom come.*" This may serve to illustrate another text which has been much misunderstood. "Then shall He deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all¹." The words have been construed to mean, that God the Father shall be the only King, and the Son's dominion shall have an end. Wherefore, then, does the Apostle say, "Of the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever²," if the Son's kingdom shall then be

⁹ 2 Thess. i. 10.¹ 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.² Heb. i. 8.

ended? The Apostle in that place seems to speak of His kingdom as Mediator, that which He holds as sent by the Father, as commissioned to reconcile man to God; that service having been performed, He resigns it into His hands from whom He received it, and God is "all in all;" the eternal Word resumes that glory which He laid aside when He condescended to take upon Himself our nature, and take on Himself the form of a servant; the act of subjection to the Father being the last act of the mediatorial kingdom. But He can no more cease to be King than He can cease to be God; and He who was from the beginning with God, must be always the living and true God, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit in that Godhead which always is one.

Having now considered this all-important subject as regards the Judge, the act, persons, time;—what remains, but that I exhort and implore you all, as those that must soon stand before the Judge of all, to "search and examine yourselves, and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God," but fully and completely, as in His sight; or rather, what ought we to do but to pray for and with one another, that we may live more like those who wait for their Lord, "and do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with

our God³?" Ought we not, then, to think with ourselves first, whether we bear the subject in mind as we ought? whether it forms a considerable part of our thoughts? whether it has a perceptible influence on our habits, tempers, and affections? whether we cherish the sense of daily responsibility which those must feel who reflect that they must soon stand before an all-seeing, holy, but merciful Judge? Should it be said, that too frequently thinking on this would so absorb our thoughts that we should not be able to attend to the business of life; I answer, God does not require us to desist from business, but so to engage in it as in His work, and do it for Him and for His glory. But surely we need not fear that we shall think too much of eternal realities: the great fear is, we all think of them too little. The great, all-absorbing interest of the world, carries us all down the stream of time too fast for us to fear being too much absorbed with the things which belong to a future state. No, my brethren, our only regret when we come to die will be, that we minded time too much, and eternity too little. Take warning, then, from the instances of mortality around you; "Let your loins be girt about with truth, and have on the breastplate of righte-

³ Micah vi. 8.

ousness ⁴;" that so, being weaned from the world and weary of its corruption, we may desire, when God's work is done in us, to lie down in our grave as a place where neither sin nor sorrow can reach us, a place of sweet and quiet rest for our weary bodies, and that our souls may be gradually preparing for the everlasting glories of heaven.

⁴ Eph. vi. 14.

SERMON XIV.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

ISAIAH vii. 10—16.

“Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David, Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For when the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, then shall he say, My Father and my Mother. And that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her and her land.”

ON a day which brought light to them that “sat in darkness,” pardon to the condemned, and comfort to the despairing, what can be more profitable than to compare the Old Testament with the New Testament; prophecy with its fulfilment? The prophecies of Isaiah were uttered during the reigns of Jotham, Uzziah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah,

kings of Judah ; of these five, Jotham and Uzziah died at an early period of Isaiah's ministry. And Ahaz appears to have been of all the kings of Judah (if we except Manasseh) the most depraved. Succeeding two pious kings, he rushed into iniquity with a greediness which showed the revolting wickedness of his heart. Every kind of idolatry was now revived, and he even made his own son to pass through the fire, and sacrificed him to Moloch. Provoked by his idolatries, God raised up against him several formidable enemies. The Edomites on the south, and the Philistines on the west, invaded his land, and on the north Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, attacked him. In his distress, Ahaz applied to the king of Assyria for help, who, instead of giving him any effectual succour, only added to his misery by insisting on his paying largely for promises which were never fulfilled. And Ahaz, having cut off the gold and silver from the house of God, in his infatuation sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, and this, says the sacred history, was the ruin of him and of all Israel. The two most formidable opponents of Ahaz, the kings of Syria and Israel, were not slow to take advantage of his perplexity, and marched their united forces against Jerusalem, for the purpose of taking the city, and setting up in it a king dependent on

themselves. But prophecy here interposed. It was not the purpose of God at the time, that the kingdom of Judah should be destroyed, and Isaiah, the neglected prophet of the Lord, was sent (without Ahaz asking) to assure him that the invasion should come to nothing, and to remind him that his want of faith was the cause of all his present troubles, and would be the source of future calamities; "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established¹." "Moreover (it is said) the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, (*i. e.* probably on another occasion,) saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God;" if thou doubtest the word of the prophet, abundant proof shall be given thee, thou hast only to ask; the depth beneath, or the heaven above, shall yield confirmation to the faith. But Ahaz, in the true spirit of infidelity, which multiplies ingenious objections in proportion to the sufficiency of proof, and tempts God no less when, like Ahaz, it refuses to ask for what He does offer, than when, like the Jews in our Saviour's time, it demands what He does *not*, met the prophet's request with a peremptory refusal: "I will not ask," and with a pretence of piety, "neither will I tempt the Lord."

Ahaz having now by his obstinacy placed him-

¹ Isa. vii. 9.

self out of the reach of help, the prophet turns from him to the house of David ; for the transition is remarkable, and speaks of what concerned not merely Ahaz, but the whole line of David's race, from whom the promised Messiah was to spring. The words "*hear now*," are always significant of some important event in the prophetic declarations, and the words "*house of David*," would connect them with what God had said to David before concerning *his house* on the first establishment of the temporal kingdom. I speak no more to this abandoned, graceless being, but to all who belong to David's favoured family. Is it not enough that ye resist the prophet's words, but will ye oppose yourselves to the express commands of God ? Therefore, whether ye will or no, a new and marvellous sign shall be given you ; not a sign suited to your low and carnal understandings, but one hidden, mysterious, and perplexing ; for since you refuse what is plain, you shall now have what is obscure. You might have asked a suspension of the laws of nature, you shall now have a contradiction to them : "*Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land*

that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."

There are several things here which require explanation; viz. First, the Person to whom the whole of the prophecy relates. Secondly, the sign of His birth. Thirdly, His remarkable name. Fourthly, the mode of His bringing up, and the removal of the cause of the apprehensions of Ahaz before His appearance.

It has been a matter of some question, whether this prophecy is to be taken in a double sense, the sign relating first to some child soon to be born, either in the prophet's family or some other, and secondly to our Saviour; or whether it apply wholly and entirely to our Lord: and it seems most probable, that it is one of those prophecies which apply solely to Christ. For, although the wife of Isaiah had sons who were themselves selected as signs of events which were soon to take place, no mention is made in this place of the prophet's family, nor had he, as far as we can gather, any child named Immanuel, nor does the sign itself correspond in any of its leading features with any event but the birth of our Saviour. The principal part of it, the birth by a virgin, is exclusive of any other event, and restricts it to that one alone. Nor could the birth of any of Isaiah's children in the ordinary course of nature, nor the

subsequent marriage of some other young woman, then a virgin, be any proper types of so great and marvellous an event as that here foretold. If again it be asked, what assurance of comfort to Ahaz could the birth of our Saviour be, an event not to occur for seven hundred years; the answer is obvious, that Ahaz, having perversely rejected the sign offered him, what was now foretold was not intended as a consolation to him, nor was it addressed to him, but to the house of David, *i. e.* to the whole family of the house of Judah, from whom the Messiah was to spring; a mode of dealing of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament history, in which we find the perverse rejection of a temporal mercy often giving rise to the offer of the spiritual and greater blessing. So that on all these accounts, as well as from the general testimony of the early Christian writers, we may gather that this prophecy is to be regarded as referable chiefly, if not entirely, to our Lord Himself. And the language in which the prophecy is clothed, the expressive summons to attend to it as something new, the remarkable phrase, that the "*Lord Himself shall give you a sign,*" with the references to it in the New Testament, all combine to favour this interpretation.

Let us mark, then, the sign itself. "Behold, a virgin," or the virgin, for the article is emphatic,

“shall conceive and bear a Son,” a prophecy which, compared with its fulfilment in all its conditions by the blessed Virgin, is conclusive against the Jews. Their verbal objection, that the word translated “virgin” may mean a young married woman, being sufficiently confuted not only by the fact that the word is seven times used in the Bible, and never in any other sense, but by the fact of its being a sign, which, on their supposition, would be no sign at all.

Let us, however, who believe, silently and humbly adore this great mystery of godliness, and admire the riches of that wisdom which effected our redemption by a union of our nature with His own, not by debasing His, but by ennobling ours; not by mixing with our corruptions, but by coming into the world pure and spotless, to cleanse us from the stain of all sin, original as well as actual. It is remarkable also, what pains the wisdom of God has taken to vindicate the sanctity and purity of the blessed Virgin. The testimony of her purity is both human and divine; *divine*, for an angel from God was sent to announce to her the tidings of our Saviour’s birth, addressing her with the high and solemn title, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee² ;” *human*, proceeding from

² Luke i. 28.

her own espoused husband, who was too just to do a dishonourable action, and too charitable to do an unkind one, and whose testimony was sufficient to protect her innocence and guard her purity; and, finally, the testimony of two other married and aged persons, Zacharias and Elisabeth, to whom Mary paid a visit in the hill country of Judea, and who, inspired by the Holy Ghost, proclaimed to the world her innocence, her purity, the grace of God that was upon her, and the fulfilment of the prophecy in her person.

From the sign we pass to the name which was to be given to the child that should be born to her. She shall call His name Emmanuel, "which is," says the Evangelist, "being interpreted, God with us³." It may be asked, how was this fulfilled, since the name given to our Saviour was not Emmanuel, but Jesus: nor do we ever hear that he took the name of Emmanuel? The answer is, that it was the custom of the Jews to give names to their children expressive of their character, or of the expectations that were formed of them. Hence, a child was often said to be called by such a name when the events of his life or his personal character corresponded to it. Thus John the Baptist was called Elias, because he came in

³ Matt. i. 23.

the spirit and power of Elias. In this way the Evangelist St. Matthew records the fulfilment of the prophecy in the text. His name was called Jesus. "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us⁴;" *i. e.* when the name Jesus was given, which signifies Jehovah the Saviour, the prophecy was fulfilled which declared that His name should be called Emmanuel; for if He be God our Saviour, He must also be God with us, dwelling in a tabernacle of flesh as man. And this is another part of the prophecy which obviously can relate to no other person but to our Lord.

Another remarkable circumstance in the prophecy is this: "Butter and honey shall He eat, that," or more probably, *when* He shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good; *i. e.* taking the latter part of the sentence first, "He shall know how to refuse the evil and choose the good;" He shall exhibit a perfect pattern of obedience and holiness at a time when children eat butter and honey, or during the period of His infancy: show-

⁴ Matt. i. 22, 23.

ing on the one hand, that though Emmanuel, or Divine, He shall still be a man, partaking of the food of other mortal men ; and yet, though a man, He shall even as a child choose between good and evil, rejecting the one, and preferring the other, as none of Adam's children do, as none can do but He who is born without spot of sin, and who Himself continues clean from all sin.

This allusion to our Lord's early life may be supposed to have been fulfilled when, being twelve years of age, He stayed behind in Jerusalem to do the work of His heavenly Father, and yet went down with His earthly parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them. The prophet proceeds: "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings;" of which we have a perfect fulfilment in the person of our Saviour. The land which Ahaz abhorred, which was the subject of his fears and apprehensions, was the land of Syria and Israel ; and long before the birth and infancy of our blessed Lord, Israel, or the ten tribes, had been carried into captivity, and the land of Syria had passed into the power of the Romans, and the fears of Ahaz from that quarter had been proved to be entirely groundless.

On the whole, then, the passage we have been

considering is best explained by that method of interpreting which confines it to our blessed Lord; and considered in its exclusive reference to Him, it shows the importance of that article of our Creed, "born of the Virgin Mary." It pleased God, for the perfecting of the work of our redemption, that as the first Adam, the fountain of our unrighteousness, had communicated a taint which descended to all posterity born to him, the second Adam, sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet by His miraculous birth without sin, might be manifested to take away our sins. And thus the value of His all-sufficient sacrifice is derived from His undefiled purity as man, as well as His infinite dignity as God. At the same time, so profound and unsearchable a mystery is best left shrouded in that obscurity in which God purposely conceals the greatness of His own glory. Evidence of the purity and peculiar grace bestowed upon the mother of our Lord and God, we have abundantly in the Bible; but minute and unprofitable inquiries are obviously discouraged by the expressive silence of the word of God respecting her in after-life, and by the studious omission of every thing which could lead us to exalt the blessed mother at the expense of her Divine Son and Lord. The aspect of the passage before us shows this; the expressive terms of the other

lesson for the day, "that the government shall be upon His shoulders⁵," that His is the mysterious secret name, is sufficient to guard us against ascribing to her whom we ought to honour as the blessed Virgin Mary, any further dignity, which belongs alone to her Divine Son. And when we see that, not only in the practice of her members (which we admit is not always a fair test of the faith of a Church), but in public and authorized books of devotion, and in the writings of canonized saints, both ancient and modern, direct prayers for health and salvation, bodily and spiritual, are addressed to the blessed Virgin by Roman Catholic writers without any reprehension from public authority, it is a duty continually to protest against a practice which has as little warrant in the Bible as in primitive usage, and which must needs be, according to Bible rules, most offensive to Almighty God. And when one single passage can be alleged out of the Word of God in which any example of such prayers is found, it will then be time to consider the benefits which are supposed to flow from the mysterious tenderness connected with the devotion of the blessed Virgin. Till then, we may be well content to believe that our Lord's own directions are suffi-

⁵ Isa. ix. 6.

ciently explicit, that "if we ask anything in His name He will do it⁶."

Let us come, then, at this happy season, and put on the wedding garment of faith and charity to meet our Saviour. Let us nourish the holy flame of interior religion by meditating on the great mystery of our salvation with fixed, adoring love. Let us dedicate to Him afresh every faculty of body and mind; let us open our hands wide to His sick and poor members; let us prepare for beholding Him in the clouds, not in the lowliness of a man, but in the glory and majesty of the Father. This day we may celebrate the double festival of His birth and resurrection, and we shall do well to begin a new year by celebrating the mystery of His sacrifice. For what but divine strength can carry us through all the unknown perils of another year? seeing that, on every year, as it swiftly rolls on into the mighty deep of eternity, this solemn warning is written, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth⁷."

⁶ John xiv. 14.

⁷ Prov. xxvii. 1.

SERMON XV.

A PASSION SERMON.

HEBREWS v. 7, 8.

“Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared ; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.”

THE Church has selected for our meditation during this week several passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and we may suppose the subject of that Epistle to be the ground of the selection. The Divine nature of Christ before He came into the world, the nature and reason of His sufferings, the perfection and glory of His priesthood compared with that of the priesthood of Aaron and his family, the various types of Christ under the Law, and their exact fulfilment in Him, and the power of faith to enable us to follow Him in His sufferings,—these are the principal subjects of this most sublime, though somewhat difficult

Epistle. It is a saying of Bishop Ken, that we should nail ourselves to the cross of Christ during Lent, that we may be prepared for the great sacrifice at Easter; and, certainly, we cannot meditate too much nor too sorrowfully on our Saviour's passion, the great fear being, not that we shall think too much of it, but too little. Who, indeed, (if he looked merely to the conduct of Christians,) could scarcely believe that Christ was crucified at this time? Who could believe that they were Christian men, if he thought merely of their utter indifference to the sufferings of Christ? Lent comes to remind them of His fasting, but they jest upon it; Palm Sunday approaches, but Christ is no more in their thoughts; Passion week begins, but they are not so superstitious as to observe it; Good Friday, but they make it a season of feasting, turning the very cross of Christ into a mockery; Easter, last of all, and they rise, not to set their "affections on things above," but to grovel in sensuality and debauchery.

This is infidelity, downright infidelity, call it by what name you please; soften it down as much as you may, it is the same spirit which cried out at the sight of Christ, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." It is the very same spirit which St. James has described as "earthly, sensual, devilish." Do not think it much, my

brethren, to set apart some time for the service of God this week. Prove yourselves really to belong to the Church, by a holy, thankful observance of the services of the Church; a continual meditation on the benefits of Christ's passion will prepare our minds for joyfully celebrating that memorial of His sufferings, the commemorative sacrifice of the Gospel, the test of faith and obedience, the blessed means and assurance of pardon, strength, and renewal.

And let us now, praying for His aid, devote our thoughts to that remarkable description of our Lord's sufferings and humiliation which the Apostle gives us, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

The words of the Apostle describe, first, the state of humiliation to which our Lord and Saviour voluntarily subjected Himself; "Who in the days of His flesh." Secondly, the earnest and repeated prayers of our Saviour, and the answer to those prayers, "Offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in

that He feared." Thirdly, the obedience which He performed, and the remarkable manner in which He learned it, by the things which He suffered.

First, His humiliation is here called, "*the days of His flesh*;" an expression implying, not only a state of former glory which He left when He came down upon earth, but a similar state to which He returned; for the Apostle adds, that He was crowned, or "made perfect." Now no language could be more unnatural or more strained than this and similar expressions of the Apostle, on the supposition that our Lord was a mere man; since a man *is* flesh, and does not become so, or take it to himself when he is born, for he does not exist before he is flesh. But let the Bible explain and illustrate itself. If we inquire, what are "the days of His flesh?" Had He any other days besides those of His flesh which are spoken of here? We meet with a full answer in other passages from the holy volume, "The Word was made flesh¹." What Word? the same that "was in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made²." "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father³," says St.

¹ John i. 14.² John i. 2, 3.³ John i. 18.

John, speaking of Him not only after His return to heaven, but while He was ministering upon earth. Thus the days of His flesh were the days of His brief sojourn here on earth, in contrast with those endless days, or rather that everlasting day, to which, without excluding other senses, the Psalmist may be supposed to allude, when he says, "Thou art My Son," *i. e.* My only everlasting Son, "*this day* have I begotten Thee ' ;" the day of eternity ; Thou art from everlasting to everlasting Mine.

Secondly, the expression "days of His flesh," supposes His entire subjection to the Father, and His taking on Himself those weaknesses and infirmities of human nature which do not imply sin. Thus, as one flesh with us, He not only felt as we do, hunger and thirst, cold and heat, and weariness ; but sorrow, suffering, fear, and apprehension of danger, and desire to escape and to be released from suffering. The religion of Christ does not enjoin upon any of us a cold apathy, a stoical indifference to our own sufferings, as if we could wrap ourselves up in hardness of heart, and bid defiance to sorrow. He who has no feeling for himself can hardly feel for others, and his assumed indifference is, after all, another form of selfishness. And to show

⁴ Ps. ii. 7.

the truth of His humanity, our Lord, though as God He is without passions, as man suffered, felt, and desired to be released from suffering.

Let us in this view contemplate our Saviour's prayer, of which the Apostle speaks. "When He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears." There can be little doubt that the Apostle here refers to the agony of our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane; for we read in one Evangelist that He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death⁵;" and St. Mark adds, that He "began to be very heavy⁶;" (as it is rendered,) in exceeding amazement and perplexity; and St. Luke says, "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground⁷." During this awful scene He prayed "three times, saying the same words."

We cannot fail to observe in this prayer of our blessed Lord, that as it was offered up with all the sense of pain, agony, fear, and grief, which belongs to our nature, and to one suffering as man, so the most singular part of it is, that dutiful obedience, that submissive reverence which ought to be the principal feature in our prayers, but was every way remarkable in His. If famili-

⁵ Matt. xxvi. 38.⁶ Mark xiv. 33.⁷ Luke xxii. 44.

arity had been lawful in any prayer, it must have been so with one who knew the Father, even as the Father knew Him, yet we find on the contrary, the prayers of our Lord characterized by the deepest humility, by the profoundest reverence. What an awful lesson does this read to us, not to trifle in our prayers to the Almighty; to take care that our spirit be sober, serious, full of self-abasement, and prostration of mind! For God is in heaven, and we upon earth. But an intense earnestness likewise marks the character of our Lord's prayer. The Apostle has used a variety of expressions to show this; he speaks of "*prayers*," "*supplications*," "*with strong crying and tears*;" and this was shown (as far as appears) not by the lengthened expressions that fell from Him, but by that inward half-suppressed anguish which manifested itself in His countenance, and in the mysterious bloody sweat that brake forth from the pores of His sacred body.

The subject of our Lord's prayer was, first, as the Apostle declares, "*deliverance from death*," that the bitter cup might, if it were possible, pass from Him. What the bitterness of these sufferings was, when the whole weight of the sins of the whole world fell on Him at once, it is impossible to conceive, and it would be presumption to attempt to describe; but we may suppose (without

irreverence) that part of His supplication was, that His human nature might be supported in so dreadful an extremity, and that God would glorify Himself by strengthening Him to suffer and to die.

It is added, He was "heard in that He feared;" *i. e.* either He was heard touching the object of His fear, or He was heard because of His fear. Either way it is remarkable, that while it is said "He was *heard*," God did not see fit to answer His prayer in that way which His human nature requested at first. For He said, "Let this cup pass from Me, if it be possible^a;" but it was not possible, and He drank it to the dregs. May we not, from this example, learn to be satisfied when God does not answer our petitions in the way our weakness wishes that they should be answered? May we not, above all, be taught never to offer a prayer for the removal of any affliction, however heavy, without adding the express condition, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt?"

But we pass to the third part of the text, the obedience which our Lord is here said to have learned, and the manner in which He learned it. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." "Though He were a

^a Matt. xxvi. 39.

Son," or perhaps *the* Son, and so exempted from all necessity of suffering, having no sin to suffer for ; for as God He had nothing to learn : but as man He learned. The children of God are not as sinners exempt from suffering, on the contrary, it is part of their inheritance as children. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" But Christ owed no such debt of punishment to the Father. How, then, or why did He suffer? The answer is, it was necessary that He should suffer, as our surety and our priest. If He would become our surety, He must bear the punishment of our iniquity: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all". If He would be at once the victim and the offerer, the priest and the sin-offering, He must learn to offer for us by suffering for us. That kind of obedience which He was now to render to God as an atonement for the sins of the whole world, could only be rendered by the sacrifice of Christ; He learned it, and could only learn to exercise it by suffering.

But the words of the text may be further explained, by comparing the expressions of the Evangelist and the prophets concerning His pas-

⁹ Heb. xii. 7.

¹ Isa. liii. 6.

sion. To those which I have already quoted, St. John adds a remarkable passage, that in the contemplation of His speedily approaching sufferings, He said, "What shall I now say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour²." St. Augustine has a remarkably instructive comment on these words in his fifty-second Tract on St. John. "I hear Him saying above, 'The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' Nor am I allowed merely to wonder, but am bid to follow Him: and again, I hear my Lord saying, 'Now is my soul troubled.' What is this? How dost Thou bid my soul follow Thee, if I see Thy soul troubled? How shall I suffer what Thy firmness feels so heavy? What foundation shall I seek if the Rock itself give way? But I seem to hear my Lord answer me, and say, 'Thou wilt the more follow Me, because I interpose Myself that thou mayest pass over; thou hast heard the voice of My strength calling thee to

² John xii. 27.

suffer; now hear in Me the voice of thy weakness; I transfer to Myself thy trembling, and lay Myself down as a way for thee to pass over.' O Lord, the Mediator, who art God over us, and Man for our sake, I acknowledge Thy mercy in being, through Thy good will, voluntarily troubled, that Thou mightest comfort those who are troubled by the sense of their weakness!"

In like manner the prophet Isaiah and the Psalmist speak of our Lord's learning obedience by suffering. In the prophetic descriptions of the Old Testament, as in the narrative of the Evangelists, there is the same anxiety not to suffer if it were God's will, combined with the same entire submission to that will, and the same willingness to bear it, which mark the character of the only perfect Sufferer. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth³." "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting⁴." "The plowers plowed upon My back, and made long their furrows⁵." "O my God, I cry in the day time, but Thou

³ Is. liii. 7.

⁴ Is. l. 6.

⁵ Ps. cxxix. 3.

hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent⁶." "I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all My desire is before Thee; and My groaning is not hid from Thee. My heart panteth, My strength faileth Me: as for the light of Mine eyes, it also has gone from Me. My lovers and My friends stand aloof from My sore, and My kinsmen stand afar off⁷." "Save Me, O God, for the waters are come in unto My soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow Me. I am weary of crying; My throat is dried; Mine eyes fail while I wait for My God. They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of Mine head: they that would destroy Me, being Mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty; then I restored that which I took not away⁸." "Thy fierce wrath goeth over Me; Thy terrors have cut Me off. They came round about Me daily like water; they compassed Me about together⁹." Thus does the Old Testament illustrate the words, "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

What, then, do we learn from this view of our

⁶ Ps. xxii. 2.

⁷ Ps. xxxviii. 8—11.

⁸ Ps. lxix. 1—4.

⁹ Ps. lxxxviii. 16—18.

Saviour's passion? First we see in it a certain proof of His sufficiency as our Redeemer. The atonement which He made was complete in all its parts. It was a sacrifice without any blemish or stain which could render it unacceptable in the eyes of God, and full of that perfection which the Father could justly accept as a ransom for the sons of men. It was a voluntary sacrifice, a freewill offering, as the Psalmist in the 40th Psalm maintains. It was, above all, a Divine sacrifice; it was the blood of the Son of God,—of Him who in His eternal Sonship or Divine nature, offered Himself without spot to the Father. It was this which gave that infinite value to the sacrifice itself, and made it a sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

But the two principal graces which are taught us at this time, are *Patience* and *Repentance*. We may see here, also, that we should never think it hard to pass through the same path of suffering to eternal glory. Did I say hard?—Ought I not rather to say, we should esteem it our greatest joy and glory? For if we suffer with Him, *i. e.* according to the will of God, righteously and patiently as He did, we shall also be glorified with Him. For recollect the cause of our Lord's suffering: "He died, the just for the unjust, that

He might bring us to God¹." "We receive the due reward of our deeds." Compare our sufferings as to number, weight, and measure, with the Lord's. Think of the contradiction of sinners, the poverty, shame, cruel usage, barbarous indignities, which He bore; and above all, that unknown agony. Then should we remember His words: "The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master²."

But surely the great call of this week is to repentance. Christ looks on us by the sacred narrative of His passion, as He looked on St. Peter, and recalled him by that look. Devote this week, then, brethren, to the meditating on the sufferings of Christ. Think of your own sins, so many in number, so heavy in account; sins in thought, word, and deed; sins of youth, childhood, age; sins of station, as rich or as poor; sins of relation—as husband or wife, master or servant, parent or child, ministers or people; sins of omission and neglect; sins of positive breach of a known law; sins against your baptismal vow; against God's offered, covenanted, repeatedly offered mercy; against the sacramental

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

² Luke vi. 40.

pledge; sins of the first and second table, infidelity, profaneness, loving other things more than God, neglect of His worship, word, and sacraments, and holy day; sins against your parents or neighbours, in person, property, character; sins of uncleanness, profaneness, hypocrisy, and not least of all, that idolatrous sin of covetousness, which makes you think this world the only thing worth having, the only thing worth striving for. Think on these things, and compare them with the sufferings of Christ; and remember that those sufferings were a ransom for these sins. That crown of thorns; that bloody sweat; those torturing nails; that bitter taunt; that cruel scourge; that scornful jeer; that wrongful sentence; the very cross itself, with all its shame and all its pain, were the bitter fruit of those sins you have perhaps this very day, without fear, without shame, without remorse, without repentance, without compunction, heedlessly, wilfully committed.

O what a subject is here for going out, as St. Peter, to weep bitterly; for confession with the penitent thief; for returning with the prodigal; for humiliation with the publican; for restitution with Zaccheus; for trembling with the jailor; for attention with Lydia; for prayer with David! "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation,

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A PASSION SERMON.

233

and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness,
lest He swear in His wrath, They shall not enter
into my rest³." One thing you cannot say—I
was not warned.

³ Ps. xcv. 8. 11.

SERMON XVI.

AN EASTER-DAY SERMON.

JOHN XX. 29.

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

It has been well observed, that if there be any part of the Bible which seems to invite our peculiar study, it would seem to be the Gospels. No doubt all holy Scripture is profitable; but parts of the sacred volume require so much previous instruction on the part of the reader, that ordinary persons often find themselves at a loss to discover the meaning of the dark prophetic phrases, or to fathom the profound arguments of the learned Paul. But the Gospels seem especially written for all mankind. Simple unpretending narrations, delightful for their simplicity, yet full of the deepest study of human nature, they captivate alike the peasant and the philosopher, the fisherman

and the sage. But they seem peculiarly valuable, because they give us so much insight into our own hearts. The Epistles, even where they are not deep, are in the form of precepts and arguments, and do not come home so closely to every-day life. The Gospels tell us, not only what ought to be done, but how our blessed Lord Himself thought, and felt, and spoke, and acted, and how His disciples thought, and felt, and acted. And as the characters of mankind in all ages are, more or less, a repetition of each other, at least in the main features of character, so what our Lord then said to them, and what they thought of His dealings with them, is a perpetual lesson to us.

Dark, and hidden, and extraordinary as the doings of our Lord and Saviour appeared to His disciples, so do His ways appear to us ; we cannot fathom, we cannot unravel them ; we grope like blind men in the way, feeling after One whose footsteps we cannot see, and following Him with fear and trembling through the deep waters, even though these waters are a wall unto us on our right hand and on our left. The Gospels, then, serve as landmarks and guides in the journey ; we often may trace in our dispositions some likeness to an incident or character recorded there, and we may profit by their manifestations of the wisdom and loving-kindness of the Lord. We

have several incidents of the kind mentioned in the second lesson for the morning service, such as the visit of St. Peter and St. John to the sepulchre of our Saviour, the devotion of Mary Magdalene, and, last, the unbelief and *wonderful confession* of St. Thomas. I say wonderful confession; for though St. Thomas has been sometimes called the unbelieving disciple, let it be remembered that he first of all made the acknowledgment of the supreme Divinity of our Saviour, and is the only one of the disciples who did so during His life-time in those express terms, at least as far as is on record. And this acknowledgment of so very marvellous and surprising a truth may be compared with what our Lord said to Mary just before, on her offering to approach Him with somewhat of human familiarity, and probably to touch His hand: "Touch Me not." He would no longer, after His resurrection, be approached as *man*; His body had already undergone a change; and He was about to resume His former glory, which He had with the Father before He came down from heaven and was made man. Well then does Thomas say at such a time, "My Lord and my God!" Yet striking and well-timed as the confession was, the disposition which required so much palpable evidence, was not suffered to pass without a gentle reproof. And

our Lord, in His usual manner, discerning the "thoughts and intents of the heart",¹ proceeded to show Thomas the unreasonableness of that unbelief of his, and to compare faith and sight as the two great principles which divide the world, and to point out the superiority of the one over the other. "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" where it is evident that our Lord acknowledges that his belief was right, and that his ascription of the Divine nature to Him was justifiable, which alone is sufficient to set the question at rest of the Godhead of our Saviour; for if He were not God, why did He commend St. Thomas for it, blaming him only, if for any thing, that he had not made the confession sooner?

Let us, then, now endeavour to follow on in the track of our Lord's declaration in the passage; and show, first, the superiority of faith over sight as a quality of the mind and heart; and, secondly, the blessedness of that believing heart which requires not that strong and irresistible proof which Thomas seemed to be looking out for.

Now, first of all, faith in its highest exercise, is peculiarly a Gospel grace. Acts of natural piety,

¹ Heb. iv. 12.

such as the worship of God as Maker of the world, the keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest, obedience to our parents and masters, and loving our brethren, depend more or less on sight. We admire the power, wisdom, and love of God in His works. It were blindness and madness not to do so.

It requires a judicial infatuation not to see the hand of the Lord all around us; it is visible to the eye of sense, it is impressed as a seal upon the whole creation, it forces itself upon us by a kind of irresistible demonstration. But acts of what may be properly termed Christian piety, all depend on unseen realities. The incarnation of Christ, His conception by the Holy Ghost and birth of a Virgin, the astonishing union of the Divine and human nature in one person, the atonement and vicarious sacrifice of the Redeemer, the doctrine of the influences of the Holy Ghost, and of a Trinity of three persons in one Godhead, the use of the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the last judgment, and the resurrection of the body, are all specially apprehended not by sight, but by faith; sight rather contradicts than establishes them, and we believe them rather in opposition to all established notions than in consequence of them. What can sight tell us of the way in which the Son of God could be born of the blessed Virgin

as man, all the while continuing God? living on earth, yet being, as Himself tells us, "in heaven?" What can sight inform us of the resurrection of our own bodies, which we see decaying, dissolving, bereft of life, motion, sense, and continuance, and reduced to ashes, or resolved into thin air, and scattered to the winds of heaven? What can sight tell us of the benefit of Baptism and the Lord's Supper? In short, what can we learn by sight either of God or of ourselves, which can lead us on in the way to heaven? He who will believe only what he can see, must make a present of faith to the infidel, and distrust Christianity itself; and he who, believing something of Christianity, proceeds on the principles of sight, may call himself a believer, but is little better than an unbeliever. In short, sight proceeds on demonstration, faith on testimony; sight on what is visible, material, palpable, tangible; faith on what is absent, spiritual, invisible, but real; sight is distrustful and jealous, faith is almost credulous, and if error there be, would rather believe too much than too little. Sight makes the hard, selfish worldling, contented with the world, and anxious to secure and keep fast hold of it, discharging the duties of religion as an offset to his worldliness; and faith makes the humble, contented, self-denying, patient Christian, liberal

of what he has, and contented to be denied what he has not, and, in the worldly man's eyes, one of the most foolish and enthusiastic, if not contemptible, persons in the world.

Again; is it not evident that God's dealings with mankind, as recorded by Himself in the Holy Scriptures, are all practical instances of the superiority of faith over sight, and of His wish to teach us the superiority? Look at the whole history of the Jewish nation; what a leading by faith and not by sight from Abraham to Simeon! Abraham suffered to live on in perpetual expectation, perpetual disappointment of his hope, and called on, even after the sacrifice of his beloved Isaac, to die a sojourner in a strange land. What a history is the history of Israel in the wilderness! and after their entrance into Canaan, how are they oppressed, led captive, and almost exterminated! And though aged Simeon did at last clasp the holy child in his arms, yet he had waited all his life long for It, and was on the eve of departing when he obtained the promised blessing.

So it is with our Lord's own sojourning in the world. He lived, it is supposed, about thirty-three years, yet of these thirty were spent in retirement, out of sight, and only three in sight, and those three so full of contradiction, contumely, and

insult, that at the close of them, after all His miracles, men only "mused in their hearts whether He were the Christ or no." So little had sight done for the recovery of the world. And no man who has ever thought of God's dealings with him, but must have seen the same purpose working, the same eternal lesson coming round,—Live by faith and not by sight; trust God in spite of appearances; believe in His mercy, power, and goodness. How many of our earnest hopes have been disappointed, our hopes blighted in the bud, our schemes all brought to nothing in a moment! God's way is still in the sea, His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known².

But what a vast superiority has faith as a practical agent over sight! For real faith is no more an act of the understanding and intellect only than love is, it is from first to last the work of the heart. A mere intellectual faith, which learns the doctrines of the Gospel as a man may learn a new language, as a mere intellectual exercise, is worth nothing; but that faith which purifies the heart, which removes mountains, which is the nurse and parent of love, is indeed a mighty power. What a narrow-minded, petty thing is

² Ps. lxxvii. 19.

sight as a principle of action ! To see men slaving on year after year in abject slavery to the world, to see them toiling like the drudges of some terrible task-master, never happy but when they have made some choice bargain, or taken some advantage, to see them put all that is real, and valuable, and good, utterly from them, and cling to what is mean and paltry, and vanishing away, what a wretched sight it is ! To see them again incapable of generous feelings and lofty aims, never raising their eyes above their mere sordid interests, and clinging to their treasure faster and faster, just as they are about to lose it, what a wretched life is theirs ! One cannot compare them to any thing else than to those miserable quacks of whom one has read in history, who used to deceive high, and even royal masters, with the hope of finding the philosopher's stone, and being able to turn every thing into gold. They shut themselves up in their room, filled with the poisonous fumes of their crucible ; day and night, day and night, they continued their unwearied search, but in vain,—till either nature was worn out in pursuit of an imaginary treasure, or some poisonous blast from the furnace blew out their life and their hopes together. So it is with men who walk by sight. They attempt nothing generous, because they believe nothing real. The world which they see

is their all; eternity is as nothing in their eyes. And the blessed music of the heavenly choir, and the heart-cheering promises of the Gospel, and the stirring exhortations of the Apostles, and the awful changes of the great day of judgment, are out of mind. What! do we require the last trump to rouse us from our slumbers, and bid us seek for oil which cannot then be bought, and light the lamps which are fast going out? But faith bids us "work while it is day," for "the night cometh when no man can work³." Faith looks not to present effects, but to God's promise and reward. Faith originates great enterprises, and is as venturesome and bold in action, as it is humble in opinion, and submissive to authority. So that while sight is cavilling at evidence, faith has mastered the difficulty; while sight stands waiting on the brink of the stream, faith has plunged in and buffeted with the waves, and is nearly landed on the opposite shore; while all the projects of sight vanish on the approach of death, faith's actions are treasured up where all that is good is remembered, while the memory of evil things will come to nothing.

"Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed."
 Are we, then, walking by faith in an unseen Sa-

³ John ix. 4.

viour, or by sight in a seen world? Is the present or the future the commanding object of interest with us? Is it our advancement or our duty? God's will or our own? The treasures of Egypt, or Him who is invisible? Recollect, brethren, outward respectability of character will not rightly determine the question. Morality and decency are good, and not to be thought lightly of, but there must be more; there must be an interior religion, a growth in holiness, a real inward love for Divine things, if we would attain to what our Lord sets before us. It is well, no doubt, to be free from gross and open crime; would to God we had all got as far as this! But we must not stop here. There is a blessed region beyond, and we cannot think of safety till we have reached that region, and walk on steadily in it. If you wish to attain this spirit, you must learn to submit yourselves to the practical rules of the Gospel, and endeavour to carry them into every-day life. The fashion of the world, the custom of society, the habits of your neighbours, must not be your rule, except as far as they coincide with the Gospel, and are agreeable to it. Where they diverge, you must diverge too. It may be disagreeable, and expose you to ridicule, but it must be done; and yet not done ostentatiously, or in an unchristian spirit, but done humbly and tremblingly; and by de-

grees you will find the path more easy, and less irksome to you. You will learn to “walk by faith, and not by sight.”

Now our Lord declares there is a blessedness in faith; and when our Saviour emphatically pronounces a thing blessed, we may be sure that it is so in a very eminent degree; for His blessing includes all possible comfort, joy, and happiness. There is a threefold blessedness in it. First, it is a blessing which belongs to the thing itself;—secondly, it is a blessing which is great by comparison of it with all other things;—thirdly, it is a blessing which is beyond all comparison, exceeding all our desires and thoughts in the glory of the world to come.

First, take the blessing of walking by faith in itself. Surely there is a contentment, resignation, and solid joy about it, which is incredibly blessed. To find God’s word a sure word, God’s promises sure promises, to live upon His word all the day long, to live in an unseen world, and in the presence of eternal realities, when we cannot see them, is of itself a world of delight.

Again, by comparison, take, for example, the case of a man who believes what he cannot see in reference to the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Which is the happier man of the two;—the man who brings his child to be

baptized, believing in the promised grace of the Holy Ghost, and not doubting or cavilling at the words of the Church, but trusting that it shall be so, though he cannot see it, and thinking the Church's authority much better than his own? or the man who cavils at every word, or has just read some fine ingenious piece of reasoning, to prove that regeneration does not mean regeneration, and grace does not mean grace; and that "this child is regenerate," means that it is not so, and that the washing away of sin means sprinkling with water? I say, which of the two is the happier man;—he who waits till he can see before he believes, or he who cannot see, and yet believes?

So again, in regard to the Lord's Supper:—Which is the happier man? He who comes to the Lord's Table, believing that it is a mystery, and that Christ is present, and is given, taken, and eaten spiritually by the faithful, and yet that the bread and wine are bread and wine, and cares not to reconcile the two, but contents himself with receiving in simplicity the words of the Lord Jesus? or is it the man who refines, and disputes, and cavils, and evades, and doubts, and deals in questions and strifes of words, and after all is no wiser, and goes lean and hungry away? Depend upon it, no man is the happier for a disputatious temper.

He may gratify his own love of subtlety; he may raise a hard question which nobody can answer; he may take the lead in a circle of disputants, but he is not the more at ease in his own soul; he is vexing and tormenting himself in secret after all; ever hearing, and yet never the nearer truth all the while. Truth is not attained by controversy; and they who spend their time in controversy, especially when they are not called to it by their station, will be sure to miss it.

And as with the Sacraments, so with the Creeds. Which is the happier man: he who is humble enough to think the Prayer-book is authority enough for a man who has no great pretension to learning, or he who with a little learning (that most dangerous thing), a little second-hand smattering of objections borrowed from some superficial teacher, is offended by what the deepest divines, the soundest scholars, the most devout, rational, and pious Christians, have continually approved, and vexes himself by a perpetual irritation whenever it is read? The fact speaks for itself. Objectors are the most unhappy of mankind; whereas submission to authority and humble belief always bring a present reward of peace and solid contentment. And viewing the matter in another light, as to practice. Which is the more blessed: he who leans upon the world for

support, or he who leans upon the arm of the Almighty? The one knows if his earthly blessings are taken from him, it is in mercy; it is only for a while; it is only a little sooner than he must have lost them; it is less than he deserves; it is to work out some greater boon. The other has lost his all; his happiness is gone when the world is gone, for he has no other in prospect. So that here, too, the gain on the side of faith is incalculable. But the very name of *faith* implies, that if sight appear to have some advantage *here*, it can have none *hereafter*. There the believer must be a gainer, not merely by comparison, but absolutely, superlatively; "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."

Oh! what must that "exceeding weight of glory be," the very glimpses of which, when vouchsafed on earth, in the transfiguration of our Saviour, in the appearances of angels, in the vision of our Lord to Saul of Tarsus, and in the manifestation of our Saviour to His beloved disciple, were enough to overwhelm and overpower the senses, and strike the holiest man dumb with amazement and with dread!

No! faith alone can realize faith's reward; and even faith itself, when the reality comes, will be

⁴ Ephes. iii. 20.

forced to give way to a higher and nobler grace,
that of love; which is the great enduring grace,
the true copy of our Blessed Saviour's image and
likeness, the restoration of man to the favour of
God.

SERMON XVII.

A SERMON FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM xxiv. 7—10.

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.”

THE Psalm in which these words occur is one of the most sublime in the whole range of Hebrew poetry. It seems (as far as we can conjecture) to have been composed by David on the occasion of the ark being carried to Mount Zion, and may have been used on that occasion, unless we suppose it first used after the building of Solomon's temple. Whatever it be, the words were evidently sung by alternate choirs of the Levites, after the manner of the Hebrews. It is, moreover, one of those Psalms which most clearly admit of a fuller

and higher sense, and which has always been understood by the Church to apply to the ascension of our Blessed Saviour. So the Church has ever understood it; so our own Church has received it from them, and so it is our privilege this day to explain it to you. The Psalm opens thus: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein: for He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." How great, how glorious, is the Almighty Maker! how astonishing His favour and condescension! how extraordinary the testimony of His love, when He chose out of all nations one peculiar people, one holy Mount, to be His earthly throne! Who, then, is fit to enter His presence, and abide in His courts? What thankfulness, what purity, what righteousness, are required! "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Such holy souls shall, as they enter the sanctuary, receive a blessing from the Lord, and be sanctified and accepted by the God of their salvation. At the close of the words there is a break or interval in the Psalm, for the procession seems to have reached the gates of the tabernacle, and the Levites, as the ark slowly and solemnly enters, begin the alternate strain; "Lift

up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Unworthy as ye are to admit the great Lord of all, give Him a welcome entrance. The alternate singers answer, and inquire, "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Once more the attendant ministers exclaim, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." The former question is repeated, "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is, "The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."

But though to the Jews this scene presented all that could be imagined that was noble, sublime, and impressive, we in the Christian Church can speak of something far more glorious, far more sublime. The Almighty Maker Himself descended to build up a temple, not of stone, but of flesh, and having consecrated it by His death, to present it as a spotless sacrifice to His Father; and on His ascension into glory, attended possibly by the saints, who were the first fruits of His resurrection, and as we are certainly assured by the angels who ministered to Him throughout His life, the everlasting doors of heaven itself are bid to open and admit the conquering King, clothed in a human body, to take His seat upon His

Father's throne. So that in the higher sense, we may understand the inspired Psalmist to describe what took place immediately after the disciples, who stood gazing upon Him as He rose from amongst them, saw Him vanish from their sight amidst the clouds of heaven.

Here, too, we ourselves may stand and wonder, and with the Church, as at this time, wait in expectation of His coming again. For He that ascended, will He not also again descend? He went up in the clouds; "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him¹;" but the patient follower of his Lord shall say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus²." May it be our earnest desire and endeavour, my brethren, so to live for the unseen world, and for Him who is the Lord of it, that we may be found worthy to behold His face, and be numbered by Him with His saints in glory everlasting! Let us consider today, therefore, such of the circumstances connected with our Lord's ascension into glory, as seem to mark that great event as something peculiar, and demanding a separate consideration.

First, then, let it be remembered, that we must

¹ Rev. i. 7.

² Rev. xxii. 20.

not confound the Ascension with the Resurrection of our Lord. Many persons do so confound them, and speak of the Resurrection in a way that only belongs to the Ascension; and, indeed, it is one of the glaring defects of the popular theology of our day to confound things that differ, and to merge many separate and distinct truths in one or two leading doctrines, and so obscure the general truths themselves. This is the case with those who confound the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, and lose sight of several important and most comforting truths.

Now we infer, from our Lord's declaration to the dying penitent thief, and from His address to Mary Magdalene, as well as from other passages in the Gospels, that our Saviour did not go into heaven till His ascension. For to the penitent thief He said, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise³;" and to Mary Magdalene, "I am not yet ascended to My Father⁴;" and when He presented Himself at several times to His disciples, it is never said He went up into heaven, but simply He became invisible to them; implying that a change was effected in His body, but that He had not yet entirely left them. And St. Luke describes His ascension in words which are still

³ Luke xxiii. 43.

⁴ John xx. 17.

stronger. "So then, after He had blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven⁵." And so St. Peter, in discoursing with the Jews after His ascension, says, "Whom the heaven must receive till the times of restitution of all things⁶;" implying that when He had once ascended, He would not return to earth until the great day of His second coming. And when our Lord says, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also⁷;"—He evidently implies that He would not come again when He had once gone, till His second coming to receive them to Himself. And all the descriptions of the Apostles in the Epistles, of the Mediatorial reign of our Lord, suppose Him to remain on His throne, when once seated there, till the day of judgment.

So that the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord thus differ. The resurrection is the completion of the atonement and humiliation. The ascension is the completion of the sacrifice and the whole of the mediatorial work. By the resurrection we are assured that we shall rise;

⁵ Luke xxiv. 51.

⁶ Acts iii. 21.

⁷ John xiv. 2, 3.

by the ascension, that we shall be with Him in glory. By the resurrection we are assured of justification; by the ascension, of an everlasting reward. And as our Lord's glorified body is probably the only body actually in heaven, because it is the only body spotless and without sin; so our bodies, as the bodies of sinners, remain, and see corruption, and wait His call: so our departure hence to the Lord answers in one sense to our Saviour's rising again, and our resurrection to His ascension.

It is at our departure that we are translated to Paradise, and rest till the number of our brethren is completed; it is at our resurrection that our souls and bodies, being in a moment united, we shall be "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord ⁸." And this view especially connects us with those who are departed; because it shows that in both there is something yet left unfinished. For they, like ourselves, wait in hope of the resurrection, only they wait in peace, and are present with the Lord; we wait, struggling hard with a body of sin and death in our members. They look for that full and entire peace which follows victory; we are still in the midst of battle, fightings without, and fears within.

⁸ 1 Thess. iv. 17

And this enables us to see another proof of our communion with saints departed into bliss—that the ascension of our Saviour must be a source of unspeakable comfort to them as it is to us;—to them, indeed, of infinitely greater comfort; for how weak are our notions after all! Let our faith be as strong as it will, still it is weak at the best; and how often is it like the strings of an instrument, which remain in tune while the skilful musician is playing on them, but lose their temperament as soon as the instrument is put by! So it is often with ourselves. We are wrought up to high and heavenly feelings; but we sink, and flag again, and fall down to earth. But it is not so with them. The bitterness of death is past; the events of time are gone by; the doubts, and fears, and sins, and infirmities which harass us are past, and they can calmly contemplate our Lord's ascension and coming again with all the certainty that belongs to their most peaceful state. How earnest, yet how comfortable, the longing which they feel for the great day of the Lord, when all the enemies of the cross shall be put under their feet!

So, indeed, the Scripture describes them:—"I saw the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried, saying, How long, O Lord,

holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And it was said unto them, that they should rest for a little season, till the number of their brethren was fulfilled⁹;" a passage which seems to harmonize with one in Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast¹."

Further, as regards ourselves. The ascension of our Lord shows us, that as a higher bliss than that of Paradise is intended, Christ is gone into heaven to prepare that very bliss for us. And we are assured of its being given to us, by the very nature with which He is still clothed; a nature like our own. What an overwhelming thought it is, that the great God of heaven and earth, the Ruler of all worlds, has taken on Himself the nature of man, and made it one with Himself! What an absolute assurance is it of His compassion for us! How much better must He have loved us, than we can any of us love one another, or even ourselves, so to regard and visit us! What efficacy does it impart to His intercession for us; what tenderness to His rule over us! How fully may we be assured, not only that what He has

⁹ Rev. vi. 9--11.

¹ Isa. xxvi. 20.

promised He is able also to perform, but that "not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath spoken²!" And then, as to the bliss itself which He is preparing, we can say but little of it, because we know but little; only we know that "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is³." Still, even what we do know so very imperfectly, how transporting is the thought of it! The first and principal part of it is, the presence of the Lord. One can hardly realize this truth at all; yet to stretch out as it were the withered hand, and just faintly lay hold of it, how truly glorious is it!

We have never yet any of us seen our Redeemer; but as Job said, "yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me⁴;" even so shall it be with us. We shall see Him "as He is," not as He was, in weakness, agony, and death, but as He is, in the majesty of the Father. How may the thought of being suddenly caught up in the air, swift as an eagle flies, to meet the coming Saviour, make our very souls thrill with awe and joy, with fear and with delight! What will the world seem to us at that moment? And you will recollect, there

² Josh. xxi. 45.³ 1 John iii. 2.⁴ Job xix. 26, 27.

will be another circumstance of a very astonishing kind, the re-union of soul and body, and this in an instant. Souls depart from the body amidst bitter agony and pain; even with those who are mercifully spared much suffering, there is terror and distress in the last struggle. But with those who love the Saviour, the re-entering of the soul into the body will be not painful but blissful in the highest degree. One cannot describe the feeling of their separation, though we see it; but their uniting again, what must that be? A union no longer burdensome and unprofitable, but full of comfort to both;—the soul no longer polluted with sin, the body no longer beset by infirmity; rising from the corruption, weakness, and dishonour of the grave, incorruptible, vigorous, immortal, glorious; a union everlasting in the glories of heaven. And then we must add to this, that the reward will be before us. For immediately on the re-union of the soul with the body, the great assize will be held, and the sentence passed; which leads us on to another thought, that the reward will be given to the servants of God in that very body in which they served God on earth; glorified indeed and spiritualized, but still substantially the same. This will surely make the reward sweeter, because it seems to include the happiness of association and recollection, which is so closely interwoven

with our nature. The recollection of our sore and terrible trials, so bitter to the flesh and spirit, will be unspeakably grateful then; "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth ⁵." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life ⁶."

Add to this another notion which flows from it, the thought of the mutual recognition of those whom we love. For my part, I do not doubt this for a moment; all our natural feelings long for it, and the Bible seems to imply it in many places; more particularly when the Apostle says, "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him ⁷." But what comfort would it be to those to whom the Apostle wrote, if they were not the same persons, and capable of being recognized as such? When Moses and Elias came down from Paradise to earth at the transfiguration, they were Moses and Elias still, and known as such. God has not implanted in us the feelings of mutual love, to quench and extinguish them in the world to come. They will burn only with a purer ardour, more intensely, more seraphically. And how great will be the bliss of an instant recognition of

⁵ Rev. iii. 10.⁶ Rev. ii. 10.⁷ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

departed friends ! a recognition accompanied with the delightful sight of millions of happy souls rising upwards to meet their Redeemer, and seeing in Him their Saviour and their friend ! Oh ! friend of sinners, God of the spirits of all flesh, suffer not any of us here present to be separated from those we love at that dread hour ! Strengthen us to endure this life's fiery trial, that we may be accepted of Thee, and stand in our lot at the end of the days.

And then what shall we say of the reward itself, when the Apostle himself confesses himself unable to describe it ? for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him⁸." Yet something we are told of it in the Bible, that our faith may not wax feeble, nor our love grow cold. We are told, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world⁹." It is a kingdom, there is power ; we are told of mansions, there are riches and pleasures ; we are told there shall be living fountains of water, there is everlasting delight ; we are told that they serve God day and night in His temple, there is the unwearying service of heaven ; we are told there shall be no more curse, no more

⁸ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

⁹ Matt. xxv. 34.

in and sorrow, there is freedom from all things evil; we are told of the vision of God and of the Lamb, there is what will change us into the same image. And yet, after all, we neither know it truly nor can describe it. Yet let us think on it, let us gaze after it, and strain our wearied eyes with wonder and with love, for it is near at hand; soon shall we hear the Archangel's trump, and see the everlasting doors give way to all who in faith and hope and charity have served God here on earth, and the dead will arise, and the New Jerusalem descend; we shall see the angels in mid-air, and all the spirits of the just along with them, and we shall hear our Saviour's voice.

Can it be real? It is.

"Grant therefore, O Lord, that like as we do believe our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end ¹."

¹ Collect for Ascension-day.



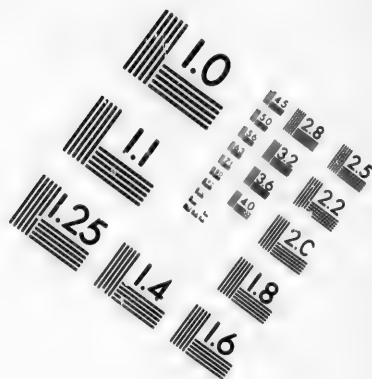
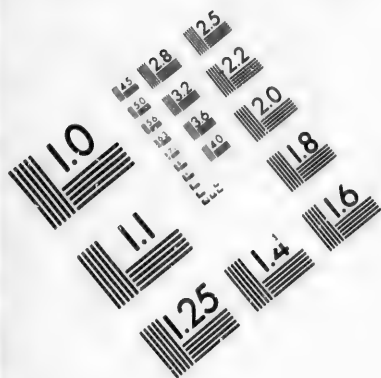
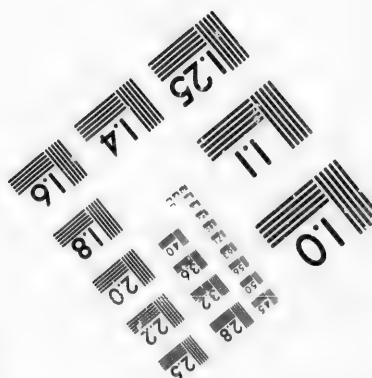
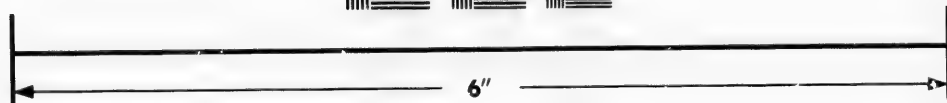
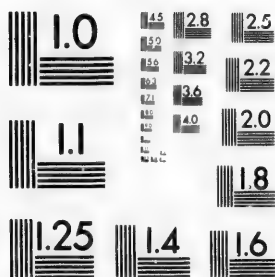


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SERMON XVIII.

A HARVEST SERMON.

ST. MATTHEW xiii. 39—43.

“The harvest is the end of the world ; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire ; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire ; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Few things remind us more strikingly that we live in a sinful, disordered world than this : that our blessed Lord selects the most joyous season in the whole year, as a type of the most awful and stupendous event that can be conceived, the last judgment. Undoubtedly we do well to rejoice in the harvest season if it be favourable, and to give God thanks that, whatever it be, it is sure to be better than we deserve ; but our Lord here seems

to check and chasten our joy when He bids us look upon the harvest. There, He seems to say, look upon the type of your own condition. This world is but the field in which the good and evil are growing together for a future separation; the one to be gathered into God's eternal garner, the other to be cast out into everlasting fire. When you see the corn bending under its weight, and the tares growing by its side, think you see holy men, by the assistance of God's grace, "doing all such good works as God has prepared for them to walk in," and ripening for eternity. Imagine you see also unholy persons, blasphemers, thieves, liars, fornicators, adulterers, covetous, despisers of God, vain boasters, implacable, unmerciful, all who forget God, and obey not the Gospel of His Son, waxing worse and worse, and ripening for their doom. Nay, carry your minds still further. When you enter the harvest field, and either yourselves ply the sickle, or witness others doing it, behold the awful work of those mighty spirits who are appointed to make the separation between the just and unjust at the last judgment. Without being able to make any more resistance than the sheaves of corn and the tares make to those who cut them down, the wicked shall be seized and consigned to that place of torment for which their obstinate rejection of God's long for-

bearance and offered mercy has fitted them, while the righteous shall shine with a lustre and glory unknown in a world of sin and woe ; made like to their Saviour, and the holy angels.

Such being the general import of our Lord's words, let us, with prayer, and fear, and self-examination, humbly meditate on the several points of instruction which He has conveyed to us by the latter part of the parable : "*The harvest is the end of the world.*" The first truth which we here learn is, that an end will soon be put to all our opportunities and means of grace, and that the character which is now forming in us, will then be more fully displayed. All that we have enjoyed from our infancy till now, all the blessings which we at present enjoy, are means for our gathering in our spiritual harvest. *The corn or the tares are ripening.* The grace of God which fell on us at Baptism, the striving of the Spirit in our hearts since that period, the voice of conscience, the authority and example of parents, the words of Holy Writ, the lessons of the Prayer-book, the advice of friends, the scourge of afflictions, the pressure of poverty, the turn of prosperity—all are intended for this end. We never hear a sermon, but it either profits or injures us ; we are never present at prayers, but we may sow, or reap, or neglect our field ; there is a vast, a

present, a growing responsibility upon us. Would that we were aware of it! Would that we thought more frequently, Do I revive and grow as the corn in the field of the Lord? Are the fruits of the Holy Spirit growing in my heart, and visible in my life and conversation, the fruits of love and peace, meekness and gentleness, temperance and sobriety, liberality and good will? For these are the full corn in the ear which the heavenly Husbandman looks for, the only fruit which pleases Him, and which He will acknowledge as such.

But the passage before us rather leads us to dwell on the certainty, that when the harvest is ripe, there will be no time to grow fruits, but to gather them. The virtues of the Christian life, the good works which the Christian is to show forth, are not to be produced all at once, and in a day, much less in the day of harvest. That truth is enforced upon us in another similitude by our blessed Lord, when He says, that the foolish virgins went to purchase oil when there was none to be sold.

And, further, the very trials of our present state are necessary for the gradual formation of the fruits. Patience cannot be ripened without provocation; love, without enmity; temperance, without temptation to excess; joy, without sor-

row ; hope, without adversity. But when trial is ended, then it is too late to think of beginning to be in earnest about these graces. They must be in actual possession, or they cannot be had at all. The time of our trial will then be past. Let us dwell a little upon this awful, yet most needful thought.

The time of our trial. Few persons probably realize that this present state is in all its parts a time of trial. To us who live in the midst of a careless, sinful world, eternity seems at so vast, so immeasurable a distance, that it is as if it would never come. Men die and pass away from the scene of their earthly pilgrimage, but the world forgets them ; the sympathy of the world is brief, its friendship is hollow and selfish, its cares are many, its business is pressing, its pleasures are multiplied, and in the midst of this bustling, noisy life, it seems as if it would never come to an end. Responsibility is forgotten ; the account which each of us shall give of himself is hid and out of sight ; life seems the reality, but eternity an unreal and shadowy thing, a tale of priests, a jest, a dream. Such is too often our view of life ; but this shadow (as we term it) lengthens upon us, and draws nigh in spite of all ; life, though it grows busier, waxes feebler ; character is rapidly formed and fixed, and ere we are aware of it, we

ripen for eternity, and pass rapidly into it. *Our trial is no longer—our fixed state begins.*

Now as this should make us especially anxious what kind of characters we form, what kind of company we keep, what life we lead, and how we spend our days, so it should make us think more of every opportunity of improvement. Means of grace seem, as time passes, to be many (too many for most of us); we neglect prayers in the week, because we can come on Sunday; we come to church only once on Sunday, because we may come twice, or can go to an evening service; or we intend to do what we never perform: but measure these means by eternity, and what do they appear? From the longest life one must always deduct the days of infancy, when we could not understand; the days of childhood and youth, when we often would not; the days of old age, when we cannot; the days of sickness, when we are so hindered; and how few clear days remain!

Measure, then, these few clear days, if you can, against a measureless eternity; against millions, millions, millions of years; against something we know not what it is,—it is not time, it is not to be counted by time, a dark unfathomable gulf, into which all time is but a single drop poured down the cataract, and lost at once. How

precious will time appear! yet how short, when eternity resumes its mighty reign! How blessed will those be, whose seed in time has been a harvest for eternity!

Again, our Lord uses the expression, "the end of the world." Let us dwell upon this thought a little. What is it the end of? of the world in its present state, not of ourselves. Not a coming to nothing, but a change, an end of our present state. Those who have gone out of the world are as truly alive as when they were here with us, only they are not in the body. It is an end of the business of the world. All that mankind have ever esteemed their chief end and sole delight, will in one hour come to nought; all that feasts the eye, gratifies the palate, ravishes the ear; all the schemes and intricate meshes of life, political contentions and rivalries in trade, the whole will have passed away into the great account which each must give of his share in the transactions of life. The hopes of life will be at an end also: there will be no more to expect from it;—no more dreams of ambition, business, pleasure; no more building on the chances of prosperity, and looking forward to plans and prospects of wealth, or fortune, or ease;—it will all be gone. The joys and the sorrows of the world will also be ended. "Those that wept will be as though they wept

not, and those that rejoiced as though they rejoiced not; for the fashion of this world passeth away¹." And therefore the wise man says, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart²;" and our Saviour says, "Woe to you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep³!" Not that our blessed Lord intended to condemn innocent mirth, but that He meant to show us, that so very fleeting and unsubstantial are the world's joys, that those who laugh as if there were nothing else to do but to make merry, had better turn their laughter into mourning, and their joys into heaviness, than be surprised at the last to find themselves passing into a world for which they had made no preparation, with all their joys ended, and their mirth become a vain dream.

It is a comfort to those who are afflicted to know, that their sorrows will be as fleeting as their joys have been; while, on the other hand, sorrow is so much the better than joy, that it serves as a forerunner of that higher joy which is at God's right hand for evermore. "Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.² Eccles. vii. 2.³ Luke vi. 25.

you⁴." The sins of the world will then be ended. What a consolation is this to a soul grieved for the transgressions of sinners; to one that feels as Lot, whose "righteous soul was vexed day by day with their ungodly deeds!" How thankful may such feel, that our life is not prolonged like the Patriarch's, for what greater punishment could there be to a soul which is sore beset with sorrows, or oppressed by a sense of the evil which seems incurable, than to be set down in this disordered world for so long a term of years! Happy rather are they (if prepared) whose term of life is almost ended, and who are soon to bid farewell to disorder, misery, and sin! Thus the harvest is the end of the world; the end of all man's estate; then it undergoes its last change, for the better or the worse; "*for the reapers are the angels.*"

There is something very mysterious in the whole connexion of angels with ourselves. Whether man in Paradise, had he not fallen, would have been raised up to immortality with the angels, we know not; but we are told that an angel, though fallen, sought our fall and effected it; that there is a continual conflict between the good angels and the bad, that the one part are perpetually

⁴ John xvi. 22.

plotting our ruin, and the other endeavouring to defeat their wiles. Yet, what the angels are we know not, nor their mode of access to us, nor whether they know all our thoughts, or come to us at all times or no, nor how they are present. One thing is clear, that we think of them far less than we ought, and that it is one part of the infidelity of the day, to disbelieve the ministry of good angels, and the attacks of evil angels. In this life the ministry of good angels seems chiefly concerned with assistance and ministration; but as soon as the trump is sounded, and the dead in countless numbers rise, the angels will, after the sentence is pronounced, immediately "go forth and gather out of His kingdom all things which do offend, and them which do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire."

An awful sight to think upon;—what must it be to realize? Even in this life the appearance of a single angel to the very best of men, with words of comfort and of blessing, has always been attended with fear and trembling. It seems that the sight of a being superior to ourselves, and without sin, is such as no human being can witness without fear. But how terrible must be the sight of thousands of angels, each one fearful to behold, clothed with power to sever the wicked from the

righteous, and to hurl amongst them the thunderbolts of Almighty wrath !

Let us remember then,—First, *the act of separation*. It will be certain and inevitable ; here good men lie hid, and are unknown and unnoticed ; bad men escape amidst the crowd, and think to hide themselves from the all-penetrating eye of God. But in that moment the discovery and the separation will go together. How truly awful for a man to find himself suddenly severed from all that is good, and loving, and just, and lovely, and placed in his appropriate company, amongst the ungodly, malicious, lewd, bitter, scornful, and blaspheming, for ever ! I implore and beseech the careless to listen to me for a few moments, while I set before them this scene, and entreat them to think on the stupendous reality.

Carry yourself forwards, O unthinking soul ! a few fleeting years, or moments it may be, and think ;—you will stand before your Judge, the sentence pronounced is irreversible, the angels hasten to carry it into execution. They look upon you no longer as the object of their care, but as the enemy of God. They prepare to sever you from the assembly of the just, and from the presence of God. With what eyes will you look up and behold these mighty sinless beings, each shining as the sun in his strength, ready to execute

a sentence, the justice of which even you dare not arraign: you look around for a friend, but there is none; you call upon God, but He will not hear you; you would fain hide yourself, but it is impossible! Should you not think of these things? should you turn sober realities into a jest, and make merry with your own destruction? should you not rather fear God, seeing you are in danger of such condemnation? You may be nearer to all this than you imagine. Before the end of another year, the tongue which is now filled with laughter, and the heart which says to itself, "eat, drink, and be merry," may be silent in the grave, and the soul awaiting its final sentence. Merciful Father, if there be any such now in Thy presence, whom Thou hast determined soon to summon hence, may they be prepared before they pass into that dreadful gulf, and may these unworthy entreaties not be lost on unwilling ears and hardened hearts. For they are not mine, but Thy sacred words, which follow, "and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

What that fire may be, whether spiritual or material, matters not; if it be fire, it must be painful beyond the power of words to utter. Can sinners trifle with a holy God, and sin on with a high hand, and yet not suffer pain? Is there no

pain in wicked passions, felt but not gratified, in burning lusts, filthy covetousness, gnawing envy, disappointed pride? When do sinners ever meet together, as sinners, that they do not hate, revile, and torment one another? And if to this be added, the presence of the evil one himself, the author of all mischief, there is enough in this to make the greatest misery. So that, despise not the notion of fire, here is enough of torment; for the same Saviour adds, "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth;" the bitterest self-reproach and unceasing anguish at the thought of paradise lost by pride, self-will, and unbelief, by rejecting what was so freely offered, so dearly purchased, so abundantly given.

But our Lord adds, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This part of the subject is too important to be passed over hastily, and may be reserved for another occasion. Let us, therefore, go home with our Lord's words impressed on our hearts, "Whoso hath ears to hear, let him hear." Though the power both to will and to do come of God, and thou canst neither think those things that be good nor keep His commandments without Him, yet to listen, to meditate, to reject is in thy power. He who refuses

to listen to the gracious voice which cries, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden⁵," must soon hear another voice, crying, "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment;" or, still more terrible, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh⁶."

Reflect, then, on what you hear. Follow up these truths with earnest prayer to God for His grace, carry them with you into the ensnaring world in which you live; and as business, or pleasure, or sin invite you in their turn to neglect daily preparation for eternity, sound these words in the ears of the tempter, "the harvest is the end of the world," and the corn is daily ripening, "and the reapers are the angels," and my account is at hand. You have a sin that "easily besetteth" you, and sometimes these are the sins of which we are least aware, or for which we make excuses, saying, I cannot help it. But the grace of Christ may enable you to overcome any sin, though without watchfulness and prayer none will be overcome. And if there are here any aged persons, let

⁵ Matt. xi. 28.

⁶ Prov. i. 24—26.

me remind you that your time cannot be long, though with the youngest it will be shorter than we reckon on. If you are serving God faithfully, redouble your diligence; for in proportion to your labour will be your reward. Shake off the hindrances of your salvation of which you are painfully conscious. Strive against the infirmity of temper, the weakness of resolution, the doubts and hard thoughts of God, the love of this vain and evil world, the reluctance to part with money, by which you may be occasionally overcome. Think of the pure and blessed spirits who now enjoy rest and peace, who are witnesses of the reality of our faith, and examples for us to follow, a mighty cloud of apostles, prophets, evangelists, confessors, martyrs, and infants; vast numbers of whom, new washed in the Redeemer's blood, with their baptismal robe unstained, are by a gale more favourable than that which has been allotted to us, wafted at once to the haven where we would be. All these have run their race, and wait, anxiously wait, for us, crying, "Lord, how long?" Their number is countless, but their faith is one. Their tribulation was great, but their joy is greater. Let us pant after the same rest, and echo back their longing for the end, not with impatience, though with sorrow; not with irreverence, but with fear, and love, and hope, and joy.

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XVIII.]

A HARVEST SERMON.

279

For "yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come ;"⁷ and "we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is ⁸."

⁷ Heb. x. 37.

⁸ 1 John iii. 2.

SERMON XIX.

THE CHARACTER OF NOAH.

GENESIS vi. 9.

"Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."

It was evidently with a design to adapt the revelation of God's love to the wants and feelings of man, that God provided that a large portion of Holy Scriptures should be filled with the moral portraiture of separate persons. The human mind, ever fond of imitation, delights in biography, prefers example to precept, and gladly retires from the severity of the one, to the meekness and gentleness of the other. What curiosity induces us to look into, admiration leads us to copy, and by degrees we find that to be possible, which before seemed quite beyond our reach.

Among the most remarkable of Scripture portraits, stands pre-eminent the father of the old world and the new, a man selected by God, with

two others, as specially approved by Him and specially beloved. For Noah, Daniel, and Job, are the three mentioned by God Himself, as persons to whose intercessions He would have listened, had it been possible at that time to listen to any. To be an object of favour with Him who is no respecter of persons; to be specially singled out by name, to have that name recorded by an inspired writer in the Holy Scriptures, and handed down to posterity as pre-eminent for virtue, wisdom, and holiness, is so very rare an honour, that only three of all mankind from the beginning of the world to the end have attained unto it; but of these three Noah was one.

Some points of resemblance, and some of dissimilarity, appear between the three. Noah, Daniel, and Job, stood alone and single in their generation; Noah, exhibiting a pattern of justice amidst continual rapine, of filial and paternal affection amidst universal brutishness, of devotion amidst general riot, of faith amidst prevailing unbelief; Job, setting us an example of faith amidst universal idolatry, of temperance amidst general sensuality, of unbounded charity to the poor, of patience amidst unparalleled suffering; Daniel, one of the few who sought the Lord God of Israel as captive in a strange land, and chief

among those few: a man royally descended, yet a captive, and though a captive a Jew; a stranger beloved by five succeeding monarchs in three successive universal empires; a prime minister in five corrupt courts, yet alone untainted, uncorrupted; himself surrounded by sensual pleasures, yet a man of abstinence from his youth; having in his hands all the business of that vast monarchy, yet never omitting secret devotion three several times each day; remarkable for his loyalty to his king, and still more signal for devotedness to his God; a man who, to use Bishop Ken's words, "reconciled policy and religion, abstinence and abundance, greatness and goodness, power and subjection, heaven and the court, the favour of God and the favour of the king, and was alike beloved by God and man." Such were these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job. Equally remarkable were they also in their connexion with the Gospel. Noah, as a type, whose ark floating on the water is compared to the Church with its water of baptism reposing upon the covenant mercy of God, inclosing within its bosom those who by God's mercy take refuge in it. Job, as an example of the faith and patience of the saints in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, who "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God¹."

¹ Acts xiv. 22.

Daniel, as a prophet to whom was vouchsafed the choicest revelation in all the Old Testament, of the precise time of the coming of the Messiah, of His being cut off as a sacrifice for sin, of His kingdom the Church Catholic, of the destruction of Jerusalem, of Antichrist, and of the day of Judgment.

Yet though the three thus resemble each other, there is also a remarkable contrast in the times in which they lived. Noah flourished in a time which we have reason to hope can never occur again, when one family stood alone in the midst of the earth, and all else was brutish impiety, bloodshed, and blasphemy. Daniel, in the busy crowd and voluptuous splendour of an Eastern court, at that time the centre of the world. Job, in the pastoral simplicity of the Arabian desert, sitting as a chief among his people; showing us, that however times may alter, or circumstances vary, real virtue and holiness are the same substantially at all times, and that the love of God is the only thing that, like Mount Zion, "cannot be removed, but standeth fast for ever²."

Proceed we then to view the excellencies of one of these remarkable men, *Noah*, whose life the Church has brought before us in this and the preceding Sunday. We observe, first, in the de-

² Psalm cxxv. 1.

scription, *his justice and integrity*: "Noah was a just man." That he was a *justified man* we know, for He walked with God by that faith of which Abel became the first martyr, by which Abraham went out from the land of his birth to a strange land, and of which St. Paul records God's approbation. But of his justification he gave the only true evidence, that he was a just man: both accounted righteous, and actually righteous, for he could not have continued in justification unless "his faith had wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect."

Justice and integrity are always valuable, because they cannot easily be imitated. Professions of religion are easily made, religious phraseology is soon caught and copied, the Shibboleth of religious party may admit the indulgence of irritating and unchristian feelings; the external appearance of devotion it is very possible to assume; but real honesty of character, integrity of purpose, and justice unbending to take an advantage or inflict a wrong, is neither easy to be attained nor easy to be counterfeited. But to say that Noah was thus just, is not to exhibit the main features of his character. He was not merely just, but the only just man amidst a world of injustice. Of truly just men in our days there are but few; few who never use dishonest arguments in a good

cause, nor practice dishonest arts to promote a bad one; few who never take advantage of the ignorance of their neighbour to gain their own end; few who speak the truth always, never equivocate, hate and abhor lying. But of that justice which passes current among us, how much is produced by the standard of public opinion and public shame! How many are influenced unconsciously in their integrity by the fear of losing caste and station, and not by pure love of honesty and truth, and the love of God! But in Noah's days public opinion had no existence. Written revelation there was probably none, and all that remained was a mass of iniquity, so corrupt and cankered that its very touch was pollution. Yet then was Noah just: his workmen who helped to raise the ark might defraud him, but he repaid them not as they deserved; his neighbours might embark in schemes of injustice and rapine, but they found in him no partner; the gigantic tyrants of his day might return home laden with the spoils of their iniquitous oppression, with none to reprove their sin, none to vindicate the oppressed, but Noah remained faithful to his God and to his neighbour, unswerved by interest, undaunted by oppression. There is nothing in which men are more in danger of being led astray, than by the earnest desire at all hazards of promoting

what seems to them to be a good cause. And those who to serve their cause scruple not to employ dishonest means themselves, or allow their agents to do what is technically called the dirty work of a party, are obviously preventing the ultimate success of righteousness and truth, furnishing their adversaries with the weapons which may be turned against themselves, and while they gain a soldier, they lose a fortress.

But we pass to another excellency of this remarkable man, that he was "perfect in his generations." In all the relations of life he was perfect and sincere. Whether as a father, husband, or child, he walked before God in His ordinances blameless. But the phrase "in his generations," compared with other expressions of like import, seems rather to signify, according to the general sense of interpreters, that among the men of that generation he was perfect; that when sincerity and uprightness, and religious observance of God's ways were almost fallen to the ground, Noah alone stood upright.

When one looks abroad upon the world, and sees how few men are ever able to stand alone, one sees at once the loftiness of the proportions of Noah's character. Noah stood alone, he boldly stemmed the torrent, and posterity has done him justice: and while the men of Noah's days, the

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famous men, who thought to secure for themselves an undying fame, are gone out of mind, and their memory has rotted and come to nothing, Noah's name alone remains enshrined in the book of God's remembrance, in the everlasting register of heaven.

Never was this lesson more needed than it is now. Every day men are pronouncing that certain things are right in theory but impossible in practice; right, *i. e.* if what they say be true, agreeable to the truth of God, to honesty and justice. Can a thing be agreeable to God's word, right, honest, and true, and yet impossible to be done? Impossible it may be, consistently with the attainment of other advantages of a present and worldly kind, which we hoped to secure for ourselves together with it, but it cannot be impossible in itself; for God has not so placed us in the world between a sea of contradictions, as to make His commands impracticable, or His ways impossible of performance. The real difficulty lies in our own miserable system of expediency, which leads us to view a thing as impossible, because it cannot be effected by the means which we think necessary to bring it to pass.

Noah's character may teach us, that, while in matters of discretion, and judgment, and experience, we cannot too carefully weigh the argu-

ments of others, nor too readily listen to their suggestions, in matters of plain honesty, and justice, and sincerity, we cannot too boldly take our stand, and stand, if need be, alone. For our great danger obviously lies the other way. Considerations of interest, honour, and worldly gain, will always make our minds, corrupted as they are by connexion with the world, to turn the scale, and we are generally skilful casuists where emolument and party interest are concerned. It is difficult, indeed it is almost impossible, to form a sufficiently high estimation, in this respect, of the character of Noah. For our very familiarity with the Bible produces an undervaluing of the characters recorded in it, especially of those whose history is so concisely told.

Yet how much is included in the Scriptural word *perfection* ! not indeed signifying a righteousness without spot, or a life free from every stain, but such an ardent thirst for righteousness, such an universal practice of it, such an union of different excellencies, difficult in their separate attainment, and much more difficult in their combination, as few Christians in the days of the Gospel even seem to desire, much less actually to attain. It is this very pressing forward to perfection, the want of which is so evident among us. Our Christianity is stunted, dwarfish, suppressed ; Noah's religion,

anterior to it, was high-toned, fresh, and vigorous. He, like a single tree of giant stature, stood forth alone, in a wide-spreading plain, a mighty contrast to the barrenness around. We, in a rich and fruitful soil, in the very vineyard and garden of the Lord, think it much if we have not become degenerate plants of a strange vine⁵; our very luxuriance is dwarfishness, our fruitfulness is poverty.

How few Christians do we behold of the larger growth which was not uncommon in earlier days; when men were not content to live in decency, but aspired to perfection; when calls of charity were considered to be blessings, not burdens; when the solemn season of Lent was universally acknowledged, not a mockery which the clergy read and the laity despise; when men did not inquire how the commandments might be narrowed, and limited, and restrained, but how they might be expanded and enlarged, and taken most comprehensively; when to serve God was a pleasure, and to give accounted more blessed than to receive, and to pray a holy joy, and to fast a means to make the body fit for the exercises of the soul; and to love the poor, and the Church, and God, was placed in the same category of Christian graces! We may

⁵ Jer. ii. 21.

safely allow, that some in their zeal to attain these graces went beyond their knowledge, and others, in their eagerness to attain particular graces, failed in securing what was of more importance; but this will not justify us in our low and superficial notions, our few and scanty attainments. A Christian who finds that year by year no actual progress in the Divine life is made, no increased love for the duties of religion, no greater fervency and holiness of character, no higher, holier longing after perfection, has great reason to suspect the staple character of his Christianity; and to fear that possibly he may be ignorant of the real nature of the plant itself; and instead of the goodly vine bringing forth much fruit, he may only have attained to a name, and nothing more, to the proprieties and decent selfishness of the world, not to the self-denying holiness of the Gospel.

But to return to the third excellency of the character before us, *his faith and devotion*; "Noah walked with God." It is remarkable, that in the two signal instances of holiness exhibited at that time in the world, Enoch and Noah, the one translated at once to Paradise, as a flower too precious to breathe corrupted air, the other reserved to be the repairer of the old world, and the father of the new, this same phrase is used, *they walked with God*—a most full and significant expression. They

were evidently men whose minds were given to contemplation, who, finding nothing congenial in the world of sinners, betook themselves to Him who alone can fill and satisfy the soul, and regained the bliss (which Adam had lost) of converse with the Father of their spirits. And as Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide, keeping up as it were the Paradisiacal custom, so Enoch and Noah, we may suppose, armed themselves by devout contemplation for the difficult task of resisting the torrent of iniquity that swept all before it.

They walked with God. We read of Noah building an altar to the Lord, and offering a sacrifice of clean beasts to Him who had appointed sacrifices, as the great commemoration and type of the incarnate Saviour. Nor can we doubt, that both by words and deeds in his family and out of it, the holy patriarch strove to turn from the error of their ways the wretched beings who surrounded him; but strove for sixscore years in vain. But most of all, these expressions seem to imply that high-fixed, single-minded faith, which led Noah to regard himself as a pilgrim and stranger upon earth, and thus to devote himself to the service and work of God; to take God's word (as far as revealed) for his guide, and God's promises for his portion.

Thus we understand by his walk with God, a constant worship of God, performed with all the exactness and devotion which reverence and love could inspire; a humble thankfulness to God for His providential guidance; a sure trust in God, not only for the things of this life, but for higher blessings in the life to come; and a simple obedience to God's commandments cheerfully performed, without fear of consequences, without distrust or hesitation. This is indicated by the expression which occurs at the end of the chapter; "*Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he* ⁶." The happiness of such a mind, how is it possible adequately to appreciate? Like the ark into which he entered, his faith bore him up above the waters, and set him in a sure haven, full of peace and safety, while the wicked were like the troubled sea whose waters rage without ceasing. How vainly do we look to excitement for peace, when it is to be had in one way only, in the path of uniform obedience! How foolishly do we seek it in things without us, when it is to be obtained within! "For the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" ⁷." This was Noah's character; just, sincere, devoted. But

⁶ Gen. vi. 22.

⁷ Isaiah xxxii. 17.

he is remarkable also as a typical person. For as all things in the Old Testament were figures and shadows of better things to come, so in the old world we discern the image of the new. The waters that bare up the ark in which the righteous souls were saved, St. Peter selects as the image of Baptism, that ordinance which places us in a state of salvation, and saves us if we continue in it; and (to complete the image) the ark evidently betokens the Church, which is God's appointed instrument to effect our salvation, and by which we become members of Christ's body, and partakers of all the saving blessings of the new covenant. But as the ark saved none but those who continued therein to the end of the voyage, so Baptism saves none who remain not in the body of Christ, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness to His praise. And as the ark, which was the instrument of their temporal salvation, bore them safely above the deluge of the old world to the landing-place on the new; so, safely borne within our ark, and preserved by God's mercy, we may "pass through the waves of this troublesome world," and preserved from the second deluge of fire, may be landed at length on the mountains of the heavenly Jerusalem! One instance, indeed, of the frailty of the Patriarch, and but one, is recorded; an instance the

more painful, because it occurs in a life so pious and sincere; the more pardonable, perhaps, because it seems likely that he was unacquainted with the intoxicating nature of the fruit he had planted: but at all events the more important, because while it fully proves the entire faithfulness of the sacred history which represents men and things to us as they are, not as they ought to be, it leaves impressed indelibly in our minds the solemn lesson of our own weakness and sinfulness. Yet Noah committed but one such offence: let us take heed how we imitate him in his sin instead of copying his holiness. Let us learn from Noah the virtues which are the main pillars of the Divine life in every age—*justice and integrity* towards man, *faith and devotedness to God*. We live in times whose artificial refinements and luxurious indulgences are perhaps even more fatal to holiness, than the brutish impiety and reckless tyranny of the men in the days of Noah. For the one disgusts by its grossness, and the other allures by its decency. Let us more thoroughly devote ourselves to God, to the Father, Redeemer, Sanctifier, whose love has placed us in the ark, that we may be saved through Christ for ever. Let us not fear to take our stand for religion; let us arm ourselves with Noah's courage, constancy, and faith; let us avoid

as the very gates of hell every mean subterfuge, and the lie which God abhors; let us cleanse ourselves from the secret indulgence of those greedy, sensual lusts, which enfeeble the body and dishonour the soul, which defile the temple of the Holy Ghost, and provoke Him to depart from us. For may we not fear that He has departed from some of us? that we have by careless, presumptuous, profane irreverence, or secret indulgence of sin, already done despite to the Holy Ghost, and put our Saviour to an open shame? It is, indeed, greatly to be feared. O that we may at the last, even at the latest hour of the day, relent, and not yet more harden our hearts! For, as bitter were his reflections and sad his looks, who saw the ark safely floating past him, and at last discerned the dire necessity of seeking the mercy he had till that hour despised, so much more intolerable will be his case, who, once placed within the very ark itself, madly betook himself to the waves without, which toss, but cannot satisfy the soul, and must in the end drown it in destruction and perdition.

SERMON XX.

JAEL AND SISERA.

JUDGES v. 24—28.

“Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be ; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk ; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman’s hammer ; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down : at her feet he bowed, he fell : where he bowed, there he fell down dead. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming ? why tarry the wheels of his chariots ?”

WERE we to consider the chapter selected for the first lesson of the day merely as a piece of poetry, or as a subject for a picture, certainly finer could not possibly be imagined. With what extraordinary power and beauty does the Hebrew poet describe, in this spirit-stirring song, the history of Israel’s captivity, and Sisera’s discomfiture ! Here we have graphically depicted the deplorable deso-

lation of the villages in Israel—the grass growing in the streets—the travellers afraid to proceed on their journey—the inhabitants of the villages retiring to the mountains—the bands of armed men who infested the wells and fountains of Canaan—and then the masculine courage of Deborah—the timidity of Barak—the devotedness and heroism of some of the tribes, and the apathy and cowardice of others—the mighty host of Sisera, eager to swallow up the dauntless Israelites—the valour of the chosen people—the tempestuous floods which aided in the discomfiture of the Canaanites—their vain attempt to cross the swollen and impetuous river Kishon, where in thousands they were swept away—the mingled confusion of their army—the escape of Sisera to the house of his former friend—his reception and death by the hand of a woman, as the Lord had foretold by Deborah—all these events, though they occurred three thousand years ago, are as freshly and as vividly before our eyes, as if they were of yesterday. But it is not as an historical or poetic description that we are to take this remarkable passage of Holy Writ—a deeper moral lies hid under the words, and more profitable instruction is conveyed to us by them. In order to that end, I shall consider the following questions:—

First, whether the conduct of Jael on the occa-

sion were justifiable or not. Secondly, the probable nature of her reward; "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent." Thirdly, whether it is in any sense recorded for our imitation; and if so, how far we are to imitate it. Fourthly, what lessons we learn from it in reference to the Christian's spiritual warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

First, whether the conduct of Jael was justifiable. Let us, then, review the circumstances of the case. It is to be borne in mind, that the Israelites at that time lived under an extraordinary and miraculous dispensation, under which, in order to their settlement in Canaan, God had expressly enjoined it upon them to root out and destroy all those wicked nations whose abominable idolatry and filthy vices had drawn down upon them His displeasure. It did not ¹ ~~become~~ their choice to prefer one person above another in the execution of the Divine will; and their neglect of the Divine command was the cause of their subsequent captivities and miseries. Some of the Canaanites were suffered to remain, and they proved, as Moses had told them, scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes¹, snares to them

¹ Josh. xxiii. 13.

when weak, and oppressors when strong. By these very Canaanites then did God punish them, and for their departure from Him gave them up into the hand of "Jabin, king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor²." But the time came that the people were awakened to repentance for their sins; and Deborah raised up for their deliverance, descended to the field, and "came to the help of the Lord" (as the sacred historian narrates); *i. e.* avenged the cause of God and His people against the ancient and devoted enemies of God and His Church. Of these wretched idolaters, thus doomed to destruction, all were either slain in battle, or were drowned in the river Kishon. Their general, Sisera (as fierce and sensual as the rest), sought shelter at the tent of his former friend, Heber the Kenite. His wife Jael, at first received him courteously, and treated him hospitably, but while he lay asleep in the tent she took a nail, and smote it into his temples. The question is, was this an act of treachery or an act of duty? In considering whether the act was justifiable or no, the whole question turns upon this, whether Jael had the authority of God for so doing? If she had, it was an act of duty; if she had not, we should be inclined to say it was an act of treachery. For the authority of God decides the

² Judges iv. 2.

question. He who gave life to His creatures has a right to take it away, and may authorize us to be the instruments in depriving them of it. In fact, the case occurs continually in human laws, and no one disputes the matter. For example: the jury who bring in their verdict against a murderer—the judge who passes sentence upon him—the jailor who delivers him up to be executed—and the hangman who suspends the rope to the unhappy victim, are all causes in some sense of his blood being shed, but not in the same sense guilty with himself of shedding blood. In their case they act in obedience to the law under the Divine sanction: in his case he acted in violation of the law, and contrary to the Divine sanction. The principle on which Jael acted may, therefore, be thus fairly vindicated. The wretch (for such he was) who sought a shelter at the tent of Jael, was by God's law condemned to die. To give him shelter, to protect him against the Israelites, was, therefore, to fight against Israel and against God. The cause of Israel was God's cause, and in taking part with Israel against Sisera, she took part in fact with the Lord against His enemies, and so far did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; several expressions in the account put this beyond doubt. "Curse ye Meroz, (said the angel of the Lord,) curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;

because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty³;" again, "So God subdued Jabin, the king of Canaan, before the children of Israel⁴;" and at the conclusion, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might⁵." With regard to the manner of Sisera's death, it may be observed, that as a woman and unarmed, Jael had no opportunity of destroying him in open fight, and it was, therefore, natural that she should do it (if at all) in the manner she did.

The great point is, however, the principle; which can only be justified by the consideration of the command of God to destroy all the Canaanites; and on that supposition, it was plainly a duty she owed to God to destroy the man whom He had condemned. On the same principle Jehu justified his slaughter of the worshippers of Baal, though the spirit in which he did it was not equally commendable. In the same way we find in the book of Kings, that "one of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour *in the word of the Lord, Smite me, I pray thee.* But the man refused to smite him. And it came to pass, that as he departed, a lion met him and slew him⁶." Thus an

³ Judges v. 23.

⁵ Judges v. 31.

⁴ Judges iv. 23.

⁶ 1 Kings xx. 35, 36.

action wrong in itself without a special command, becomes by that command not only justifiable, but necessary, and he who did it not was slain for refusing to take his part in the transaction. But we turn to the second question. The nature of the reward bestowed upon Jael. "*Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be.*"

It must be remembered, then, that there are two kinds of blessings spoken of in Scripture, temporal prosperity, and spiritual grace and comfort. The blessing which God gave to Abraham contained both. To Isaac He promised, not only that he should "become a great nation," but that, through him, all mankind should be blessed: "I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." But the blessing of Ishmael was only of a temporal character. "Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation⁷." So, when Jacob on his death-bed blessed his children, he made no reference whatever to the posterity of Ishmael⁸. In regard, therefore, to the case before us, we are not called on to pronounce on Jael's spiritual state; her reward was suited to her action. As an act of faith she had destroyed the enemy of God, and so it was foretold that she

⁷ Gen. xvii. 19, 20.

⁸ Gen. xlix.

would be distinguished above all women, renowned for her action in all ages, and prospered in some particular manner. Thus in the 137th Psalm, "Blessed," *i. e.* prosperous, "shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

But, thirdly, was the action recorded at all for our imitation; and if at all so recorded, in what sense?

To make this clear, it may be observed, that the Jewish dispensation differs entirely from the Christian. It was a temporal dispensation. It was intended only to last until the coming of our Saviour. It was instituted with a view to the preserving the national church of the Jews, and keeping them a distinct people till the time came for introducing that better covenant. The Law was enforced chiefly by temporal sanctions, and the promises referred chiefly to the promised land. In the Christian dispensation all things are changed. The promised land to us is not Canaan, but heaven. The good things which belong to the promise are not the grapes of Eshcol, the goodly houses, the wells digged, the vineyards; but they are the comforts of the Spirit, the pardoning grace of the Gospel, the ministry of angels, the presence of God, the hope of eternal glory through Christ. Our rest remaineth, it is enduring, it is

in heaven; "here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come⁹." The enemies with whom we have to contend are chiefly of a spiritual kind: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places¹." Or if wicked men may in any sense be called our enemies, as being the enemies of God and His Church, the weapons by which we are to oppose them are not those of the sword and the spear, but the weapons of reason, kindness, the word of God, and prayer.

The action, therefore, of Jael is only so far to be imitated, as it is transferred typically to our spiritual foes, "the lusts that war in our members," and the devils who continually plot our destruction; with these, indeed, we are to wage the same war, to "buckle on the armour of God," to "fight the good fight of faith," to go forth "conquering and to conquer." With these we are to have no peace, to esteem them as deadly enemies, and to pray earnestly for their subjugation and destruction. To them we are to transfer the language of the inspired Psalmist, "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am

⁹ Heb. xiii. 14.

¹ Eph. vi. 12.

not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies²."

And we may profitably inquire of ourselves here, Have we, brethren, this stern, fixed determination against the enemies of the kingdom of Christ? Is there no lust too dear for us to sacrifice at the cross of the Redeemer? Specious as the excuse may be for sparing them, do we without delay or remorse cut them all off, and with faith and love join in the service of the Captain of our salvation, "enduring the cross, despising the shame?"

The contest is long, difficult, and severe. We cannot expect to win the battle, if we enter it with faint hearts and weak resolutions. We must be decided, resolute, prayerful, and vigilant; our hearts must be fixed, trusting in God, our eye constantly looking unto Jesus, our hand ready to ward or to strike the blow, our walk steadily advancing towards Zion. Like Jael, we must disregard the entreaties of ungodly acquaintances, and the fears of a coward heart; weak as we are, we must venture on great things, and in the strength of our God shall surely prevail.

But let us bring together a few practical lessons

² Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22.

arising from the history thus typically considered, with reference to the experience of the Christian warrior.

First, in the captivity of Israel, we see the evil effects and deceitful promises of sin. So "the wages of sin is death³." It is sure to work out the misery and destruction of the sinner. In the case of Israel, what was the end of their sparing the people whom God had commanded them to destroy? What resulted from their alliances with them, their marriages with those monsters of iniquity—those foul and sensual idolaters? Just what might have been expected; exactly what was foretold. "They will turn away their hearts from Me, that they may serve other gods⁴;" "and it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until He have destroyed you from off this good land, which the Lord your God hath given you⁵." How awfully fulfilled was the threatening in Leviticus⁶! How exactly has every evil fallen upon them which is there enumerated!

Now is it not so with the believer under the Christian dispensation? What must ever be the

³ Rom. vi. 23.

⁴ Deut. vii. 4.

⁵ Josh. xxiii. 15.

⁶ Lev. xxvi. 14—39.

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result of concession of principle but evil? We may purchase peace, it is true, for a time; but what kind of peace will it be? a peace hollow, insincere, unsatisfactory, and, at best, temporary,—a peace sanctioned neither by the word of God, nor by the experience of the people of God,—a peace which the world giveth, and which, therefore, the world can easily take away.

Concession of principle has been in all ages the bane of good men, and the policy of bad men. The man of God who came from Judah tried it, and was slain by a lion; Jehu tried it, and was condemned; Pilate tried it, and was despised by the Jews, and forsaken of God; Caiaphas proposed it, and the evil which he feared came upon him; St. Peter fell into the snare, and was rebuked severely by St. Paul at Antioch. Let us, brethren, endeavour to act consistently and decidedly on those principles which we profess. As Christians, let us firmly and zealously, but modestly, confess our great Master in the midst of the world, believing that the course which is most for His glory and for our profit, is the decided course. As consistent members of the Church, let us not scruple to avow our attachment to her communion and her principles; and while with full and free toleration, we allow others to differ from us in their views of truth, let us not

imagine that we shall really advance the cause of truth by merging or compromising Church-principles. In short, in all our conduct let us follow the apostolic injunction, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good".

But, my brethren, if we derive some profitable instruction from the conduct of Jael, considered typically, and with due limitation in reference to our own course, if we apply it practically, how fearful a lesson do we learn of the wages of sin from the example of Sisera! He came to the tent, thinking to save himself from destruction, but he finds a fatal enemy where he expected a stedfast and faithful friend. He is offered milk and butter in a lordly dish, but he knew not that the nails and the hammer were behind. How mean does the proud captain look, fallen dead at a woman's feet, and slain by a woman's hand! Where was the boasted prowess of his arm? where his nine hundred iron chariots, his exulting hosts? where the proud expectations of his mother and her companions? where that impudent delight in the gratification of his lusts, in the vanity of his sordid appetites? How wonderfully is the shame of these idolaters exhibited! "Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey? to every man a damsel

or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil? So," says the victorious Deborah, "so let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might⁸." So shall it be at the last with every sinner, and with every sin; the sinner shall be destroyed like Sisera, while his sins shall be published to his everlasting disgrace.

Oh! how earnestly should we all pray to be delivered from the flattering arts and delusions of sin, to have our nature renewed and our souls inwardly strengthened, our understanding enlightened to see its danger, and our wills subdued that we may flee from it and resist it! And to be delivered from the love of sin, the love of Christ must be implanted in our hearts more firmly. Then every cross will be cheerfully borne, and every burden light; then every thought will be brought into subjection, and every unholy desire rejected; we shall increase in faith, and the fruits of faith; to faith we shall add manly courage and holy energy; to courage and energy, sound knowledge of the doctrines we profess, and the duties that devolve

⁸ Judges v. 30, 31.

upon us; to knowledge a temperate and thankful use of all our blessings, and a moderate and holy restraint in the enjoyment of all earthly good; to a holy temper, the love and fear of a reconciled God; to godliness, brotherly and kindly affection; to brotherly kindness, that expansive and unfeigned charity which shall live when prophecies, tongues, and knowledge shall all have passed away, and which will increase and abound through the ages of eternity. Finally, let us bless God that under the Gospel dispensation, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. To a feeling mind, the duty of extirpating the Canaanites must have been a most painful duty. No such sacrifice is required of us. We are come to a better covenant, established on better promises, and the command to us is universally, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you⁹." Are any of us ready to censure the conduct of those who act in this manner? Let such ask themselves, whether they fulfil the Saviour's dying injunction, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another¹?" You that think the slaying of Sisera cruel and unjustifiable, is your

⁹ Matt. v. 44.

¹ John xiii. 35.

conduct marked by obedience to God's commands, or are you living in malice, or envy, or covetousness, or any known sin? How easy, comparatively, is your task! how light your burden! "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye²." For "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him³;" and "hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us⁴."

² Col. iii. 12, 13.³ 1 John iv. 16.⁴ 1 John iii. 24.

SERMON XXI.

AHAB'S FALL AND END.

1 KINGS xxii. 20—24.

“And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee. But Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, went near and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?”

THE Bible history differs in one respect from all other history; it is the history not of facts only, but of motives and principles. It not only tells us what things men did, but why they did them. It leads us behind the scenes, shows the secret springs of human action, places before us in a most clear

and convincing light the real character of ungodly men, and then sends us away to "commune with our own hearts and to be still." In ordinary histories, the number of the forces on either side, the bravery of the soldiers, the skill of the commanders, and all the pomp and circumstance of war are theatrically displayed, while the great Disposer of all events seems to be forgotten. In the Scripture account the reverse of this is the case. The glare and noise and pomp of the battle are forgotten; but there is a still small voice which speaks of Jehovah's hand overruling all; and some one event is singled out from the rest, and placed prominently before our view, to show us the amazing wisdom, the wonderful forbearance, or the awfully retributive justice of God. Such is the case in the history before us; every line is full of interest—every word has a moral lesson, which comes home to the sinner's heart, which says, Remember Naboth, remember Elijah, remember the interview in the garden; "heaven and earth may pass away, but God's word shall not pass away."

The chapter opens with an account of a violation of a treaty, between Ahab and Benhadad the king of Syria, by the latter. Bad as Ahab was, Benhadad was probably worse, a thoroughly profligate and unprincipled man. Ahab had been

remarkably kind to Benhadad, and therefore his pride was the more hurt at the ingratitude of a man whose life he had spared, and who, in spite of a solemn covenant, refused to restore one of the principal cities which had been formerly in the possession of the kings of Israel. About this time Jehoshaphat, who, it seems, had allowed a family connexion between himself and the Israelitish monarch, came down to Samaria to pay him a visit.

We little know what events a day may bring forth, nor how an ordinary visit to a friend may be pregnant with the most disastrous consequences to both of us. But Jehoshaphat was evidently not in his place : for what concord had the pious monarch of Judah, who still loved and adored God, with the idolatrous king whose hands were imbrued in the blood of the prophets of the Lord, and whose doom had been already publicly pronounced by Elijah? But when Ahab inquired whether he would aid him in the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, Jehoshaphat tendered his willing services, and at once acquiesced in the proposal. This gives us a view of Jehoshaphat's character.

In the parallel passage in the 2nd book of Chronicles, we learn that Jehoshaphat stood very high as a pious devoted servant of God. He was one who

set himself to serve God with all his heart; he had the courage to put down idolatry, to restore the reading of the law in all the cities of Judah, and he was remarkably successful in his wars with heathen nations. It is of Jehoshaphat that we read that beautiful instance of dependence on the power of God, that when attacked by an invading army of very superior force, he set himself to seek the Lord God by fasting and prayer, and obtained an answer to his petitions. But Jehoshaphat was a man who loved to please every one. He had, no doubt, an amiable, facile, pliable temper, and he carried it to excess. It led him not only to engage in the society of persons who could do him no good, but to give way in matters of right and wrong; to sacrifice his duty to the wish to please.

Into how much danger to their own souls, into what painful and humiliating circumstances, are persons of this temper continually brought! The ungodly only seek their acquaintance that they may please themselves, and obtain a kind of countenance from them; and thus the only chance of continuing the friendship is, by frequent concessions, by conniving at conduct which they must in their consciences disapprove, through fear of being deemed uncourteous and uncivil. They find it necessary to "become all things to all men,"

not "that they may be able to save some," but that they may keep up a hollow friendship, without producing any good effect on the hearts of their acquaintances, and certainly to the injury of their own souls.

It is a great attainment in Christian conduct, though it is one that few of us exactly reach, to be courteous, and yet decided ; affable, yet not compromising ; easily entreated, yet not easily turned from the right way. Certainly, to be either weakly giving way to the world on the one hand, or superciliously unbending on the other, is by far the easiest way. Yet Jehoshaphat went as far as he could. He was accustomed never to undertake any thing without asking counsel of God, and this was too important a business to proceed in without asking His guidance. "And Jehoshaphat said, Is there here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him¹?" But how could Ahab inquire of God, who had been a wicked idolater and a cruel oppressor for twenty-two years? No; he must go to men of smother tongues and lying hearts; to the four hundred prophets of Baal, who yet remained, and flattered him in his iniquities.

He had almost forgotten by this time Elijah's

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 7.

sentence ; and amidst the luxurious splendour and revelry of the court, his mind would easily turn from it. Baal's prophets seeing him bent upon undertaking the expedition, found no difficulty in complying with his inclination, and concluding, from Jehoshaphat's alliance, that he would probably be victorious, were unanimous in their predictions : "Go up, and prosper ; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king ²." But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied ; he must have regarded the men as deceivers and sycophants, whose object was to gain the favour of the king by flattery. Where were Elijah and Elisha, those famous prophets of Israel ? Was there no prophet of the Lord besides to whom they might repair ? This proposal was not at all pleasing to Ahab. "There is one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord ; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil ³."

How clearly do we see, that the moment ungodly men find their favourite lusts are thwarted by their religious companions, they demur to it ; they cannot bear to be interrupted or checked in their course of sin ; they hate the faithful monitor, they

² 1 Kings xxii. 15.

³ 1 Kings xxii. 8.

hate the person that will not let them sleep in sin, but forces them to reflect on their iniquities! "I hate him!" That confession might be made by many a heart which perhaps is less honest, but equally opposed to the truth. "I hate him!" and why does he hate him? because he does not speak good of him; that is, because without any of those qualifications or reserves which the heart of the impenitent sinner loves, he declares the "wrath of God as revealed from heaven against every soul of man that doeth evil;" because in charity to Ahab, he had warned him to "flee from the wrath to come."

Oh, how awful a proof it is of the depravity of our nature, of the base ingratitude that reigns in our hearts, that we should hate the person that would do us good! And have we not been in some respects guilty of this crying sin? Have we not turned against Him that chastised us for our profit, and our rebellious hearts have been filled with murmurings against the Lord our God? When we have felt a restraint put upon us by the authority of parents, the checks of conscience, the advice of friends, the warnings of God's ministers; have we not sometimes rebelled against the hardness of the precept, and wished we were allowed to have our own way?

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Jehoshaphat gently checked the guilty monarch, saying, "Let not the king say so⁴." Unwilling to disoblige his ally, Ahab sends for Micaiah, and during the interval, again the false prophets raise their united voices with shouts of exultation and triumph, as if the victory had been already gained; "Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper; for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hands⁵." One of the foremost of them, "Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, made him horns of iron; and he said, Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them⁶."

Unity is not a decisive mark of truth; hand may join in hand against it, multitudes may contrive to overthrow it; even ministers of the Gospel may be led away by the popular cry, and positively declare that such is the will of God. But in such times, the true believer will resort to the law and to the testimony. Though all men deny and forsake the Saviour, he will stand firm and unshaken as a rock; and such was Micaiah.

We cannot conceive a more severe trial of principle than this; four hundred false prophets against one man, standing unsupported even by the vacillating Jehoshaphat, his friends around

⁴ 1 Kings xxii. 8.⁵ 1 Kings xxii. 12.⁶ Ver. 11.

him urging him to speak smooth things, and prophecy good to the king; even a dubious or equivocal answer might save him; but Micaiah stands firm, "as the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak⁷." "And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king⁸." At first we are ready to ask, What, is Micaiah false? O no;—there is a grave but cutting irony in the words that forbids any such conception. His tone, his manner, his concealed indignation, made even Ahab see that he intended it as a rebuke. You wish to be deceived,—“he that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies;” go then, and prosper. But Ahab, impelled by a kind of irresistible impulse and curiosity, which even wicked men have to know the truth, adjures him to tell him that which was “true in the name of the Lord.” And Micaiah then intimated, that the Israelites would soon be deprived of their king, and, having no master, would return home as sheep without a shepherd. “I told thee,” says Ahab to Jehoshaphat, “that he was bent on speaking evil of me.” Thus in a sinner’s eyes, those who

⁷ 1 Kings xxii. 14.

⁸ Ver. 15.

tell him of the danger he is in, speak evil of him. Micaiah then follows up the graver message by a prophetic vision which he had seen, representing, in a way accommodated to the capacities of man, the determination of God to permit Ahab to follow his own delusions, and to listen to the voice of the false prophets who led him to destruction. And by the lying spirit who went forth from the Lord, we may either suppose is meant Satan, the father of lies, who never acts but by Divine permission, though not by Divine authority, or, more simply, the passage may merely mean, that when a sinner is bent upon hardening his heart against God, the worst punishment that can befall him is that God should give him up to the wilful blindness which he loves. But the vision which Micaiah saw is a clear representation of the truth. The two kings sit majestically on their thrones; but, says the prophet, I see by the eye of faith a throne invisible to mortal eyes, on which sits the eternal, immortal, and only wise God, surrounded by all the host of heaven, "who doeth all things according to His will, both in heaven and on earth, who putteth down one and setteth up another; with Him is strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceiver are His. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth

the strength of the mighty." All evil counsels come from the evil and malignant spirit ; but that evil spirit could have no power but by the permission and decree of the Almighty. And when God gives up men to strong delusions that work their destruction, Satan is merely the permitted executioner of the vengeance of God, who is as far from doing evil as from not punishing it. How bold, how faithful, how noble a heart is that of Micaiah ! in spite of the affronts of Zedekiah, and the menaces of Ahab, and his order to imprison him, and feed him with the bread and water of affliction, he still persists in his faithful message : " If thou return in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me ^o ! " Micaiah being thus led off to the dungeon, to lie there in misery till Ahab returned to see what other tortures he could inflict upon him, Jehoshaphat and Ahab prepare for the battle, and Ahab devises by what means he may defeat the counsel of the Lord. He craftily proposes to change robes with Jehoshaphat, and, giving the king of Judah the post of honour, he retires to the ranks unknown.

Here we see the danger in which good men place themselves by their connexion with the ungodly. The selfish proposition of Ahab nearly

cost Jehoshaphat his life. But Ahab bears no charmed life against the dart whose course is winged by heaven. No armour of steel can beat off the stroke; no Damascus blade ward off the blow. It comes, though from a hand unseen, yet with unerring certainty; it pierces the joints of his armour; it was shot at a venture; it fell by God's appointment, for His right hand finds out them that hate Him. "If a man will not turn," says David, "He will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; He ordaineth His arrows against the persecutor¹." Ahab feels himself wounded, and struggling against a conviction that his doom is come, commands himself to be stayed up in his chariot; but his wound is fatal; the blood gushes out into the midst of the chariot, and while it is being washed in the pool of Samaria, the dogs lick up his blood, according to the word of the Lord by Elijah; "and thus," says Bishop Hall, "Micaiah is justified, Naboth revenged, the Baalites confounded, Ahab judged, and God is shown to be righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works!"

And now let us take the three prominent cha-

¹ Ps. vii. 12, 13.

racters in this awful history, *Jehoshaphat*, *Micaiah*, and *Ahab*, and reflect on the lessons that we should learn from each of them.

First, *Jehoshaphat*.—The blemishes in this good man's character are intended to teach us the importance of decision in religion. Let every one at the beginning of his course sit down and count the cost, and having done so, make his choice. A vacillating, undecided mode of acting, is not acceptable to God, nor respectable in the eyes of man, and cannot be successful in the end. If, from an excess of amiable feeling, we suffer ourselves to be led away by ungodly men, who to suit their own purposes will be sure to flatter us for our liberality, freedom from bigotry, and all those specious phrases which they know how to apply with effect, at what point shall we stop? Here is *Jehoshaphat* urgently inquiring for a prophet of the Lord, yet afraid to support him; wishing for his opinion, yet ashamed to approve it; suffering the prophet to be hated and imprisoned without a single remonstrance, and endangering his own life to please his crafty and hardened associate. Let us beware of going to the verge of what is doubtful, lest we speedily fall into what is criminal. An ungodly friend is a real enemy; and he who is God's enemy ought not to be our associate.

Secondly, *Micaiah*, too, claims our regard.—

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Oh, how does the eye of faith pierce through the crowd of fears and apprehensions, and soaring above man's threats, and man's frowns, reach the eternal throne of God! A believing view of the glory of heaven, my brethren, sets us above the world, and makes us more than conquerors over it. Nature is weak, but grace is strong; our arm is feeble and powerless, but we lean on the arm of Omnipotence; hosts of angry foes surround us, but there is an invisible host, countless in number, mighty in power, that surround us as with a wall of fire, and protect us from their bonds. They may frown, they may threaten, they may lay hands on us, they may proceed to deeds of violence and blood, but they cannot overthrow the faith of the feeblest saint, if he is found upon his knees trusting in Jesus: they cannot hurt one hair of his head. Sooner shall the powers of heaven be shaken, and all the elements of the world melt away, and the earth be burnt up, than shall one jot or tittle of God's promises be brought to nought. Therefore, O believing soul, rejoice in the midst of trials! Consider what God's servants formerly endured. You are not beaten on the cheek for the Gospel's sake, nor thrust into prison, nor fed with the "bread of affliction, and the water of affliction," nor are your feet made fast in the stocks, nor are you

forced to fly into a distant land, nor are you here tortured with the extremities of hunger and thirst, impaled or burnt alive; yet perchance your freedom from trial may prove more dangerous to you than the persecutions of these good men were to them. Therefore hold fast, and watch and pray against temptation of every kind; for we are more easily allured into sin by the smiles of the world, than driven into it by its terrors and threats. And may we who are ministers learn from Micaiah's example, not to give flattering words, nor call base crimes by soft names, nor buoy up the hopes of hypocrites with specious falsehoods, but declare the whole counsel of God, and speak what is profitable, though it be displeasing!

Lastly, from the history of Ahab, let us beware of self-deception, wilful self-deception. The worst punishment that God can inflict, is to give us up to the delusions of Satan and our own hearts. The Jews in their blindness wanted a king, but rejected the King of kings, and crucified Him. They called for a sign from heaven; yet though the Saviour did so many miracles, "they did not believe on Him." They declared, that if all men believed on Christ, the Romans would "come, and take away their place and nation," and into what a pitch of madness did they rush when the Romans did come and besiege them! They fought

amongst themselves; they stopped their own supplies; they devoured each other with the sword; and still refusing to believe in a crucified Saviour, they themselves were crucified, until there were not crosses found for them.

Are there any of you, my brethren, who are thus trifling with your convictions, and dealing deceitfully with God and with yourselves? Remember, then, the history before us. Remember Ahab's fall at Ramoth-gilead. Remember the warnings he heard—the prophets that preached to him—the false promises on which he leaned, and how all gave way at the last. Such is your case, whether you will believe it or not. Invitation after invitation, conviction upon conviction, has been impressed upon you; yet you have blinded yourselves, framed some ingenious excuse by which you could get over it, and your hearts have become harder than before. Beware lest God put a lying spirit into your heart, and give you up to the evil which continually lurks there. If Ahab, blind idolatrous Ahab, was guilty, what is our guilt who trample under foot the Blood of the Cross? For when the time is come for retribution, in vain will you endeavour to avoid, or to evade it; in vain will you disguise yourself when you enter into the battle with God; the unerring shaft of Divine displeasure will find its way to

your heart, will pierce into your inmost soul, and force you to cry out, in the agony and sore amazement of your spirit, I see the truth, but it is now too late.

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SERMON XXII.

JEHU.

2 KINGS x. 30, 31.

"And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in Mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in Mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart ; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin."

"THE sins of some men," says St. Paul, "are open beforehand, going before to judgment ; and some they follow after¹." The marks of gross and open ungodliness are so evident in some of the characters of the Bible, that we find no difficulty in deciding on them at once. There are others, however, of a more questionable nature. When the individual sets out well, but is grossly

¹ 1 Tim. v. 24.

inconsistent ; when one part of his life differs from that of another ; when his professions and his actions are at variance, and the Scripture says very little on the subject, we are sometimes at a loss how to come to a right decision. The difficulty becomes greater when the Bible speaks of God's approbation of actions which appear at first sight to be contrary to His commands. No Scripture difficulty is, however, so great as that which presents to us the same individual first commended by God for what appears, on a superficial view of the case, to be a very wicked action, and afterwards punished (in his posterity at least) for the same action for which he had been at first commended. This difficulty lies in the chapter before us ; and in considering Jehu's history, it is our duty to endeavour to solve it.

When we enter upon Jehu's history, one of the first things we read of him is his murder of his sovereign, then of all Ahab's sons by means of a letter dispatched to the elders of Samaria ; further, of the whole house of Ahab ; and finally, by a stratagem, of all the worshippers of Baal in Israel. At the end of this series of crimes, we find, to our surprise, that the Lord said unto Jehu, " Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in Mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was

in Mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." Yet, if we turn to Hosea, we read, "And I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel²." Thus we find the following, as it appears, strange combination of circumstances: Jehu approved and commended for conspiring against his master, and murdering the descendants of Ahab; and yet the house of Jehu punished, in succeeding generations, for that blood, in shedding which they had no share, and for shedding of which their ancestor had been commended.

I have thus, I believe, fairly given the utmost strength of the objection. Let us now consider how it may be answered.

First, we may lay it down as a sure position, that God never commands anything to be done which is morally wrong, nor punishes anything which is morally right. We are sure of this, for "God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man³."

Secondly, God may command certain things to be done, which it would be wrong in us to do if He did not command them, because no one would be invested with any right or power to do

² Hosea i. 4.

³ James i. 13.

them independently of God's command. The right to take away life for certain offences is vested in the magistrate ; no private individual has the right to exercise that power. Those who do so independently of such authority are, ordinarily speaking, guilty of murder. But the magistrate is not guilty of murder when he orders the guilty to be executed, because the power of the sword is put into his hands by God. Those, therefore, that act under his authority, and are the immediate instruments of the execution, are free from the charge of murder, because they act in the performance of their duty, in obedience to the authority of the magistrate, which is derived from God.

Thirdly, we may easily conceive it possible for a magistrate to act in the discharge of his duty, and do nothing more than the law permitted him, and yet to act with motives and dispositions so contrary to the spirit of the law, that it might be doubtful whether he were discharging a greater duty, or committing a greater sin. If a magistrate, for example, had a personal enemy whose life were forfeit to the law, if in the execution of the sentence his motive were merely to gratify his own hatred and revenge, to accomplish his own selfish ambition, and to raise himself on the ruins of another, if he merely looked to his own

selfish ends in passing sentence upon him, then, though the execution may be an act of justice, it is at the same time a great sin; not a sin as far as the public is concerned, but a sin as regards himself. This, then, was Jehu's case. Jehu we are to consider, not as a private person, but as a magistrate; set apart to the office by God Himself, for the purpose of executing judgment on the wicked family of Ahab. That king had been guilty of two wrongs, for both of which he deserved to suffer death; first, the murder of Naboth; secondly, idolatry. The whole family of Ahab participated in his crimes, and God, therefore, taking the matter into His hands, invested Jehu with this authority, and bid him slay the descendants of Ahab. So far the action was to be commended, as it was an act of public justice, executed on public and most atrocious offenders.

But in the execution of it, Jehu had other ends in view than the pleasing of God. Personal ambition, personal vanity, the establishing himself on the throne of Israel, these were Jehu's ends, and when he had done this, he had done all that he could do. The destruction of idolatry was a secondary object in his eyes, the possession of the throne was the main object; when he had gained this, he took no heed to walk in the ways of the Lord. While, therefore, Jehu was com-

mended for the one, he was reproved for the other. But why should Jehu's house be punished for Jehu's sin? Because, though they had not been guilty of the same blood, they were actuated by the same blood-thirsty spirit. They walked in the steps of that idolater whom Jehu their father had slain; and as they filled up the measure of those iniquities which Jehu their father had practised, the cup of the punishment of those iniquities was given them to drink, just as our Saviour had said to the Jews, "Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore, also, said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required from this generation³." "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers; ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell⁴?" Thus, there are three reasons why God commended the action of Jehu in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and yet avenged it on his house; first, because though Jehu did that which God commanded him to do, yet he did it not to please

³ Luke xi. 48—56.

⁴ Matt. xxiii. 32, 33.

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God, but to gratify the evil desires of his own heart. Secondly, because, though he destroyed Ahab's house, he did not destroy Ahab's idols. Thirdly, because he followed in the way of Jeroboam, and his children after him. The temporal reward, therefore, was granted to him, because he had destroyed the enemies of God, though in an improper spirit; but the visitation followed in its time. And let us learn the lesson here, to beware of only going so far in obedience to God as serves our inclination. Saul went according as he was commanded by God, to slay the Amalekites, and he came back full of self-complacency at what he had done. "Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen," the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, "to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal." But he was met with the reply, "Hath God as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams^s." It is a very awful, it is a tremend-

ous consideration, both for us and for you, that we may be employed in God's service, we may be doing in one sense God's work, and yet may be doing it with a heart so disobedient, with motives so defective, that the more we do, the more do we displease God by doing it; and we may have our reward. We may obtain the applause of men, the favour of the great, the honour, or the wealth, or the pleasure that we sought after, but it is all nothing, it is all vanity in God's sight. Thus we may enter the house of God, go through the whole service with decent and apparently devout regularity; but if God sees our heart is after our idols, if He sees that while we are here we are seeking amusement and pleasure, or setting up the stumbling-block of our iniquity, will the Lord be inquired of by us? "As I live, saith the Lord God, Surely, because thou hast defiled My sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall Mine eye spare; neither will I have any pity." But let us turn to Jehu's conduct in another instance. After the slaughter of Ahab's family, as he is going to Samaria to destroy the worshippers of Baal, he meets with Jehonadab the Kenite, son of Rechab: will-

⁶ Ezek. v. 11.

ing to engage in his service a man who was, probably, celebrated for a somewhat austere and gloomy piety, he cried out to him, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot. And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord. So they made him ride in his chariot⁷." If Jehonadab were a good man, he was imposed on by this show of piety, and expecting that Jehu would continue as he had begun, he rode with him in the chariot to proceed with the expected reformation. But, if he expected this, he was wofully deceived. No sooner had Jehu seated himself firmly on the throne, than he was as ready to sacrifice to the golden calves of Bethel and Dan, as he had before been to destroy those who worshipped them. We may learn from this passage how to discern real piety, from the affectation of it. No doubt we must make great allowances for different tempers, and persons of lively dispositions and fluency in language may express themselves very differently from others of more thoughtful minds, and yet be sincere; but false zeal makes ostentation the object, and piety the means of display.

⁷ 2 Kings x. 15, 16.

In what danger are we in the present day from imitating the conduct of Jehu ! “Come with me, and *see* my zeal for the Lord.” Nothing is thought well of now, unless we can see the immediate effects of it. What arts are put in practice to make proselytes, to gain followers, to attract congregations, to please men’s eyes, to tickle their ears and their fancy ! Those who can talk the loudest, and pray the most fluently, and give the most interesting detail of their own experience, are the most pious ; and those who say little, but are in secret on “the Lord’s side,” are considered as cold and carnal persons, having very little of the spirit of religion. For my part, I believe that a great deal of what is called religion amongst us is little more than “Come and see my zeal for the Lord,” while we forget that our Saviour said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven^s.” And this (I will not call it bad taste, though it is so) but, I should rather say, unsound principle goes through, in a greater or less degree, the whole of the religious world.

What meretricious arts are practised to attract public notice, to blazon forth our own good deeds, till, as we have reason to fear, when we have thus before all the world proclaimed our own virtues,

^s Matt. v. 3.

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God will say of us, "They have their reward!" And this delusion goes further; it not only accompanies us through life, but reaches even the bed of death. There, where it might be supposed that every delusion would be dissipated, that hypocrisy would throw aside her mask, that amidst the awful and agitating prospect of eternal retribution, truth only would be desired and sought for; even there it is still said, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord;" and the sick are taught to say what they do not feel, and if they can but put on an appearance of departing in peace, and dying happy, their souls are sure to be saved; as if a life of ungodliness and alienation from God were to be cancelled by the empty pretence of dying happy. For my own part, I should have more hope of a man who died in despair, than of those who die in such delusions, who lay the flattering unction to their souls, and cry, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace."

A true contrite sorrow for sin, a hearty determination to forsake it, a humble but stedfast reliance on the merits of Christ, a submissive resignation to God's will, a love for holiness and constant endeavour after it, can alone make death safe and eternity glorious. Let us not, brethren, let us not deceive ourselves, when there are such plain marks of Christians as these; "If any man

have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His^o ;” “Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven¹ ;” “Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham² ;” “But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life³ ;” “and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity⁴ .”

Last of all, let us contemplate Jehu in his treatment of the worshippers of Baal. So far he might have been justified or excused, that all those worshippers of Baal were guilty of idolatry, and as such, by the law of Israel, punishable with death ; and that in another instance the tribe of Levi was approved by God for having assisted in destroying the worshippers of the golden calf⁵. But the manner of doing it, it is impossible to approve. It savours of the wisdom that is from beneath, which is “earthly, sensual, and devilish.”

The truth of God, says an eminent divine, needs no man’s lie. Jehu might have destroyed the place, and forbid the crime, and punished all who

³ Rom. viii. 9.

¹ Matt. vii. 21.

² Matt. iii. 9.

³ Rom. vi. 22.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

⁵ Exod. xxxii.

were guilty of it, without this treacherous mode of action. But do we not here see a representation of the ensnaring nature of sin? How came the worshippers of Baal to be so infatuated as not to suspect some evil design, when they were all requested so urgently to assemble in the same place? But sin blinds men's eyes, leads them to cry peace and safety, when sudden destruction is coming upon them.

Forty years before the total destruction of Jerusalem, the infatuated Jews cried out, when Pilate declared he was innocent of the blood of Christ, "His blood be on us, and on our children⁶;" and at the very time of the last fatal siege, when all was ruin and misery, and when Titus promised to spare both them and their city on condition that they would surrender to him, so obstinately bent were they on their own destruction, that they would rather kill themselves and one another, and see their children devoured, than listen to his propositions.

And here, impenitent sinner, is your case; God in His word declares that those that "obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His

⁶ Matt. xxvii. 25.

power⁷." The ministers of that word read this declaration to you; they show you the certain misery in which you are involved; they open and apply the gracious invitations of the Saviour to you; conscience seconds their efforts, and says to you, thou art surely lost through eternity, unless thou hast an interest in this "great salvation;" but you have one and another ingenious excuse, by which you delude yourself, that at "a more convenient season" you will prepare for another world, and turning a deaf ear to our remonstrances, you continue still to love sin, and work iniquity. Thus, like the Baalites, at the very time that death and destruction come upon you, you are thinking of golden days, and expecting peace and comfort. Well may we use to you the words of Jehu, "What peace," so long as sin reigns in your hearts, so long as the altar of God in your hearts is overturned, and you "sacrifice to your net, and burn incense unto your drag⁸?" Oh! I beseech you, consider the safety of your own souls; —consider that peace has no foundation except in obedience to Christ, the testimony of a good conscience, and faith unfeigned: other refuge there is none; all others are refuges of lies. You are not, however, yet in the situation of the Baalites.

⁷ 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

⁸ Habak. i. 16.

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Though sin lieth at your door, there is a way to escape. "I am," says the Saviour, "the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture⁹;" "he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life¹." And ye who like Jehu take no heed to walk in the "law of the Lord," remember that you have to do with a God whose name is jealous, who cannot endure to hear the lips express one thing, and the life say another; who will have us strive against all sin, against the sin of thought as much as against the sin of action; against the evil eye as much as against the covetous hand; against the malicious word as much as against the deed of dishonour and blood. You have to do with a God who reads the heart, who searches into every corner of it, who fathoms its depths, penetrates into the chambers of imagery, and sees the abominations inscribed on the walls. Your careless worship in the house of God, your cold, formal, and heartless petitions, your vain-glorious motives, your secret pride, your concealed sensuality, your love of pleasure more than your love of God; all these are known unto Him who has weighed you in the balances of His justice, and found you wanting. Take heed to yourselves,

lest that wrath come upon you, which ye vainly imagine to escape: "It were better for that man if he had not been born ²."

Lastly, we see here the happiness of those who can truly say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee ³." In what delightful contrast with the sins of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehu, appear the characters of Elijah and Elisha! Those bright and glorious spirits, with the seven thousand that never bent the knee to Baal, are now rejoicing and blessing God, that by His grace they "fought a good fight, they finished their course, they kept the faith ⁴;" that their perils are all past, that they "hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither doth the sun light on them, nor any heat ⁵;" that they have no wilderness to pass through, no persecuting tyrants to meet, no insincere professions to grieve over. Let us cast in our lot with those "who through faith and patience inherit the promises." "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him ⁶."

² Matt. xxvi. 24.

³ John xxi. 17.

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

⁵ Rev. vii. 16.

⁶ Heb. x. 37, 38.

SERMON XXIII.

JEHOIAKIM BURNING THE ROLL.

JER. xxxvi. 21—24.

“ So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of Elishama the scribe’s chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter-house, in the ninth month : and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.”

THE records of God’s dealings with His people in past ages, may be considered as so many standing prophecies of His dealings with us at present. And as in the book of God every line of comfort addressed to Israel of old may be considered as addressed to the contrite and believing among ourselves, so in the roll of God’s judgments,

every sinner that has not followed Christ may see his own name inscribed in legible characters. Every instance of obdurate impenitence in sinners, and of long forbearance, and at last tremendous punishment, on the part of God, is not only a call from God to our souls, "Repent, and be converted," but it is a positive prophetic declaration concerning us. And in what list, then, is your name and mine inscribed? Where shall we be found when the heavens shall be no more, and the earth shall be burnt up, and the two books shall be opened, the one containing all God's judgments of men's actions, the other the names of the heirs of eternal glory? May we not, then, all look back to this fact of Jehoiakim's burning the roll which Jeremiah had dictated to Baruch, with feelings of intense and solemn interest? What if I should be found to have burned the roll, to have effaced and destroyed the memory of the warnings of Heaven, to have wasted the moments given me for repentance, to have cast under my feet the discourses of my minister, to have "dealt proudly and hardened my heart, and hearkened not unto God's commandments?" How bitter will be my recollections, how keen my self-reproach, when God shall take again another roll, when He shall recall the memory of bygone days, of warnings despised, entreaties neg-

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lected, of convictions never followed up by a speedy, deep, and saving repentance! God grant there may not be one of us who shall then cry out with grief and amazement too great to be expressed, It is too late—too late!

The circumstances before us require a careful and attentive consideration to the history, before we attempt directly to improve them. Jehoiakim, who is the subject of God's anger, was the son of good king Josiah, that bright star in the dark and troubled firmament of Israel's history; that king who, when he heard the word of the Lord, called his people together, proclaimed a solemn fast, wept at the thought of his people's sins, and set himself to effect a thorough and complete reformation of all the crying abuses that were bringing down God's judgments on the nation. He brought forth all the vessels of Baal out of the temple of the Lord, and burned them; he put to death the idolatrous priests that burned incense to strange gods; he broke in pieces the graven image of Astaroth, which Solomon had built in his fall; every remnant of idolatrous corruption he removed; and "like unto him there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like

him¹." This good man was taken away from the evil to come, and his son, corrupted by the ungodly princes of the court, walked not in the ways of his father, but turned from the commandments of the Lord. It was at this period of abounding wickedness, that Jeremiah the prophet was called to declare the will of God. He had been preaching and prophesying incessantly for more than twenty years; but his preaching had little effect on the hardened hearts of his hearers. His lamentation was, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved²;" "the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof³?"

What a tremendously aggravated case was that of Jehoiakim! With all the advice and example of a pious parent before him, with the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah thundering in his ears, he pours contempt on the very message sent to him by God to call him to repentance! He had reigned about three years when Jeremiah was ordered to "take a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 25.² Jer. viii. 20.³ Jer. v. 31.

days of Josiah, even unto this day⁴." Baruch, whose profession was that of a scribe, wrote on a roll all that the prophet dictated to him, and on the day of a public fast, the whole was read before the people by Baruch, but it appears to have made little impression upon them. Michaiah was anxious that the princes (who were too indolent or hardened to attend the fast) should hear it also; and Baruch was called on to read it again. A momentary alarm was excited in their minds; conscience told them that they had not obeyed the commandments of the Lord, but they were afraid to venture on the king's displeasure. They therefore expressed their intention of telling the king all these words, advising Jeremiah and Baruch to go and hide themselves, lest Jehoiakim's anger should be awakened against them. The king sent one of his pages to fetch the roll, but when he had read three or four leaves, instead of humbling himself because of his sins and the sins of his people, exasperated at the plain dealing of the prophet, he took it, and "cut it with his penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth."

Perhaps we can hardly find in the whole Bible

⁴ Jer. xxxvi. 2.

a more awful instance of hardened impiety. Here is a man, who with all the advice, and prayers, and actions of his father to guide him, after a day of public and solemn humiliation for his own sins and the sins of the nation, not only shows that he has no contrition, but flies in the face of God, rends and tramples under foot the message of the Almighty, and seeks to slay the messengers of the Divine threatening. But mercy despised only makes way for heavier judgment. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah again, saying, "Take thee another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burnt. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast burnt this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore, thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah,

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but they hearkened not ⁴."

Let us now consider what instruction we may
gather from these awful events.

Our first lesson has regard to the duties of minis-
ters of the Gospel. We are not merely to administer
comfort, it is our duty to rebuke as well as to ex-
hort, to alarm as well as to console. We are not to
send people away pleased and satisfied with them-
selves. "Son of man," says the Lord to the pro-
phet Ezekiel, "if thou warn the wicked, and he
turn not away from his wickedness, nor from his
wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but
thou hast delivered thy soul ⁵." It is said again,
"Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show
My people their transgression, and the house
of Jacob their sins ⁷;" and of those who spake
smooth things it is said, "Because they have
seduced My people, saying, Peace, and there was
no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others
daubed it with untempered mortar; say unto
them which daub it with untempered mortar,
that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing
shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall;
and a stormy wind shall rend it ⁸." The fact is,

⁵ Jer. xxxvi. 28-31.

⁶ Ezek. iii. 19.

⁷ Is. lviii. 1.

⁸ Ezek. xiii. 10, 11.

we may speak of Gospel truths, and yet not preach the Gospel; we may so deliver our message as to lead every one to suppose that they are in the right way, and build them all up in an easy, self-righteous delusion, by which they "feed on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned them aside, that they cannot deliver their souls, nor say, Is there not a lie in our right hands?" We may tell them of Christ, and declare Christ crucified as the remedy for sinners, but if we administer indiscriminate comfort to all classes, we do but build again the things which we have destroyed; and, palatable as that strain must ever be to the lukewarm, the indolent, the self-righteous, and the mere talking professor, it is not the method of the prophets, nor of the Apostles, nor of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Let us not, my brethren, appear harsh and uncharitable if we do but declare that awful message which God has put into our mouths—if we warn you "that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all them that forget God,"—if we testify unto you, that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, and that whoever is not found walking in the way of holiness must perish eternally. It becomes us, in the exercise of our duty, to separate the chaff from the

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wheat, to expose the delusions by which the minds of men are deceived, to hold up the glass of the Gospel to every sinner, and bring all men in guilty before God. When we think how soon we must give account of all that we have said and done amongst our people to the Judge of all the earth, it ought to make us comparatively indifferent to the mere applause or censure of others, and anxious chiefly to approve ourselves to Him in whose sight many an action that passes current among men is condemned and rejected.

Indeed, how awful is the contempt which men manifest towards the warnings of the Almighty! In this roll was inscribed the substance of all the sermons that Jeremiah had ever preached, all those affecting lamentations over Israel which we find in the first part of his prophecy, all the threatenings of the Divine displeasure against sin; and this roll was cast into the fire and burnt. Let us examine whether the conduct of some of us has not been equally daring. Look at the roll which has been put into our hands. It contains, first, a long catalogue of mercies, blessed invitations, precious promises. If the heathen were without excuse because "they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful," what shall be said of us who, with

all they had, and so much more, with the written word displaying all the "riches of God's grace in Christ," are yet found to "neglect so great salvation?" Providence also has furnished us with a roll of temporal mercies. We have seen others cut off, and we remain the living to praise God; plague, pestilence, and famine have been all spared us; and though we deserve no more than others, yet our mercies are "new every morning." Yet in the roll there is judgment mixed with mercy; something to terrify as well as to comfort; a word of rebuke as well as of consolation. For us it is written, "Thou thinkest that thou art rich, and hast need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ¹." For us it is written, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes ²." For us it is written, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries ³." For us it is written, "When once the Master of the house is risen

¹ Rev. iii. 17.² Luke xii. 47.³ Heb. x. 26, 27.

up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are¹." For us it is written, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ²." For us it is written, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh³." Every sermon that we have heard, every mercy that we have experienced, every affliction that we have suffered, is part of the writing of the roll; and is it not in many cases like the handwriting on the wall, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting⁴?" Further, the manner in which men show their contempt of the Gospel message resembles that of Jehoiakim. He read three or four leaves, and then cast it away. So, many out of curiosity attend the ministry of the word, and if it touch

¹ Luke xiii. 25.² 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.³ Prov. i. 24—26.⁴ Dan. v. 27.

them closely, they either on one vain pretence forsake it, or make frequent excuses for neglecting it, or else they give themselves up to a careless, drowsy manner of hearing, and forget all they have heard soon after.

This leads us to observe, thirdly, that every aggravation of the sin of Jehoiakim is tenfold greater in us who live under the Gospel.

First, his knowledge was great. The whole volume of the Law, the Psalms, and a considerable portion of the prophets lay open to his view, if he would love the commandments of the Lord; and that volume spoke loudly of the anger of God against idolatry; thirty years had not elapsed since his father Josiah had extirpated that abomination, and restored the worship of the true God. If the predictions of Moses seemed too terrible ever to be realized, his faith might have been confirmed by the slaughter of the prophets of Baal by Elijah, the destruction of Ahab's house, the miserable end of Jezebel. But how much greater is our knowledge than his! The whole case of the Jewish nation lies before us, that great standing miracle, that astonishing proof of the goodness and severity of God, His goodness in sparing, His severity in punishing. The fall of Jerusalem, the captivity of the Jews, is a more awful lesson than the destruction of all the Gentile

nations. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ⁸!" Yet more; we live in an age of boasted knowledge, an age that is puffed up with imagined superiority over all others, that deems all former ages dark, and feeble, and foolish, in comparison with itself. And, though much of this is the arrogance of self-conceit, yet the most sober-minded cannot deny that knowledge is more widely diffused, that is, that our responsibility is greater now than ever it was before. And, alas! how sadly have we abused it!

Secondly, the aggravation of Jehoiakim's sin was the forbearance of God towards the Jewish people. Though they provoked Him ten times in the desert, "Yet many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath ⁹." How striking is the picture which Nehemiah draws of God's forbearance and their obstinacy! How wonderfully, my brethren, has God borne with us! How considerate has He been to us! How has He shielded us from temptation, how has

⁸ Matt. xxiii. 37.

⁹ Ps. lxxviii. 38.

¹ Neh. ix. 13, to the end.



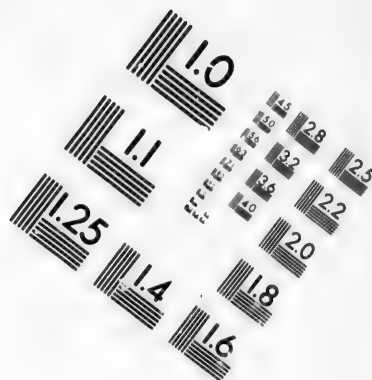
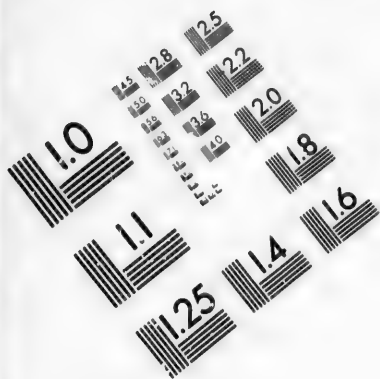
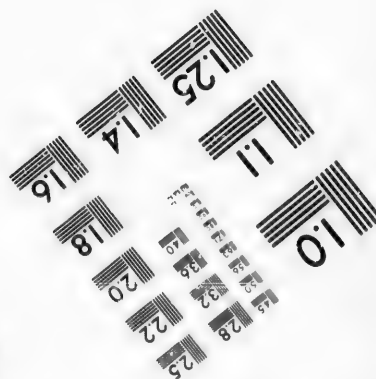
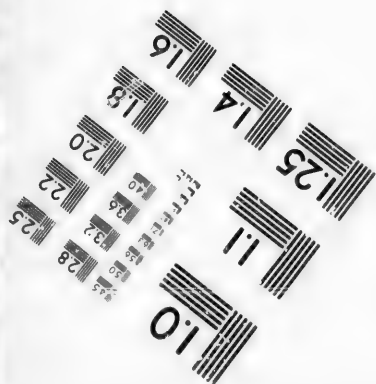
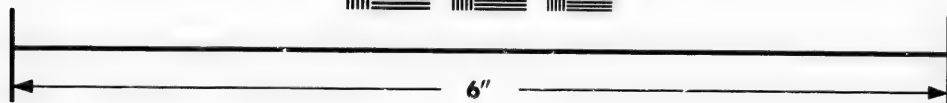
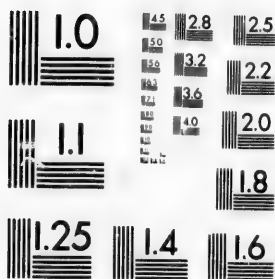


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He led us on, step by step, towards His heavenly kingdom, and yet how have we thrust ourselves into temptation, sinned against the light, and refused to come to Him that we might have life! And yet even then He waited and was merciful to us, He turned and looked upon us to bring us to repentance; "Yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath; for He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again ²." "What could have been done more to My vineyard," He asks, "that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ³?" "I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants ⁴;" and have "showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ⁵?" All this is treasuring up "wrath against the day of wrath," for every one who adds sin to sin, and wearies out even the patience and wonderful forbearance of God. And one of the subordinate but not unimportant lessons to be learnt from the account is, that sinners harden

² Ps. lxxviii. 38, 39.⁴ Micah vi. 4.³ Isa. v. 4.⁵ Micah vi. 8.

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one another in sin, more especially men of influence and station. Before the princes had consulted the king they were afraid, and might have been wrought upon to do something further, but when the king burnt the roll, they grew hardened in impiety, and some threw off all regard to religion. But we proceed to observe, that when sinners have lost all sense of shame in sinning, heavier judgments are prepared for them, and they may be sure their sin shall find them out. I have before referred to the case of the Jews, and our Lord beautifully illustrates it in the parable of the vineyard and husbandman⁶. In fact, it is the doctrine of nature, and of revelation; the wisdom and experience of ages has only confirmed the great truth, that there is no "darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves⁷;" and that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil⁸." How many ways has God of bringing sin home to a man's soul, and of making him feel that it is "an evil and bitter thing" to rebel against God! Sometimes an unusual concurrence of unexpected events brings to light the transgressions of the soul; the instruments of sin

⁶ Matt. xxi. 33—41. ⁷ Job xxxiv. 22. ⁸ Eccles. xii. 14.

are made the mean of chastisement, as in the case of Pharaoh. Sometimes God smites a sinner with blindness and destruction, so that he is at once awakened, but unable to find relief; He lets loose his conscience on him, so that he is a burden to himself: or suppose the end of all things to take place; judgment follows him into the next world, where there can be no longer any denial or concealment of it. What fruit has he now, then, of "those things whereof he will be then ashamed?" "Could any of us," says a forcible writer, "persuade the mountains to cover us, could we betake ourselves to the bosom of the great deep, could we wrap ourselves in the darkness of hell, sin would fetch us out of all, and present us naked and defenceless before that tribunal where we must receive the sentence of everlasting confusion, and where the devil, our tempter, will never fail to be our accuser." And how should this thought lead us every minute of our lives to remember that we are under the eye of that God who "seeth in secret and will reward us openly!"

Fourthly, how sure is the foundation on which the word of God is built! "The word of the Lord endureth for ever⁹." "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My word shall not pass

⁹ 1 Pet. i. 25.

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away¹." It is like its great Author, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever²." The floods of hell cannot shake it, the rolling ages of eternity cannot impair it; it is imperishable, inexhaustible. Time was when the founders of the four greatest monarchies did not exist, but the word of prophecy pointed them out to the world. Their founders arose, built a few huts, gathered a few followers; they increased in numbers and power, conquered the surrounding nations, till, like a great tree, they spread their foliage on all sides, and all nations rested under their shade. Where are those giant empires now? One by one they have gone on their way to ruin, and the nation which they despised and persecuted still survives, though in captivity. But "the word of God is not bound," chains of adamant cannot restrain its power, the mightiest intellects bow before its sway; undestroyed by persecution, unimpaired by time, it rises above all, the same simple, sure word of prophecy, which gains strength from the fall of every empire around it, and triumphs on the ruins of those that are arrayed against it. It is an unspeakable comfort to those that trust in God, that there is a roll of promise as well as a roll of judgment,

¹ Mark xiii. 13.² Heb. xiii. 8.

that as not one evil thing shall fail, so not one good thing shall diminish. Let us learn from the faithfulness of God to love Him better and to trust Him more, to harbour no unjust suspicions of His goodness even when He most sorely tries us; let us wean ourselves from every other ground of confidence, knowing that, "as the hills stand round about Jerusalem, even so is the Lord round about His people from this time forth for evermore³."

³ Ps. cxxxvi. 2.

SERMON XXIV.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

ACTS v. 1—4.

“ But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the Apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land ? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own ? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power ? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart ? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

THE dispensation of the Gospel is commonly called a dispensation of *love*. If by the expression be meant, that the love of that God, who is from eternity the same, is more fully manifested under the Gospel, in the life and sufferings of His well-beloved Son, and that the means of saving mercy are more fully placed within every sinner’s reach, and that motives to love God are more abundant, no doubt it is true ; but if we mean by the Gospel being a dispensation of love, that it is a system of

weak indulgence in sin, and of winking at iniquity, a more erroneous notion cannot be held. God is a God to be feared as well as loved; for He can only be loved when He is obeyed, and to the disobedient even our God is a "consuming fire."

Indeed every serious reader of the New Testament must remember many a passage both in the Gospels and Epistles which has made him tremble as he reads, and ask himself with jealous earnestness, Who is able to stand before the holy Lord God? who can dwell with a devouring fire? Such, no doubt, is the great lesson from the history before us. And as we tread upon the threshold of the early Church, and enter within the sacred portals of the Redeemer of sinners, we still seem to hear the self-same voice which made even Moses' heart to quake, uttering the solemn words, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground¹."

Reverence for God Almighty, reverence for His Church and His ministers, because sanctified by Him; honesty and uprightness in our dealings with Him, a pure heart and clean hands; these are the qualifications which are more than ever required of us when we draw nigh to the Divine Presence, and especially when we come to the

¹ Exod. iii. 5.

table of the Lord. For how dreadfully provoking must it be to see persons come, like Ananias and Sapphira, with a pretence of piety, professing to offer what after all is not really given, secretly keeping back the half, while in words giving up the whole, and striving as it were by an unholy mockery of the most solemn act of our holy religion, to weary out the almost unwearied patience of God! May God in His mercy keep all of us this day from any sin approaching in principle if not in extent to the foul crime of Ananias and Sapphira!

The Church in its infancy was placed in a peculiar position. Its members, having cast off Judaism, were in their turn cast off by the Jews. Temporally, as well as spiritually, they were outcasts from mankind. Property as a Church they had none, and they therefore resorted to the natural self-protection of having all things common; the rich and the poor living on the common stock which each, according to his ability, gave into the hands of the Apostles, for distribution as every man had need. It is possible that this custom even then was not adopted by all, but only by converts of more generous dispositions; it is certain that it was not compulsory on any. "Whiles it remained," that is, unsold, says St. Peter, "was it not in thine own power?" that is, did we force

thee to sell all? was it not thine own act, and not from compulsion? It is, I think, equally certain that this custom did not prevail for any great length of time, and that twenty or thirty years afterwards, when St. Paul wrote his Epistles, society was in a different state; for he could hardly have said, "Charge them that are *rich* in this world, that they be not high-minded²," had every man's possessions been thrown into a common stock; and when he commends the poor Churches for giving to their poorer brethren at Jerusalem, and cites them as an example to the richer Church of Corinth, his words obviously prevent us from supposing that at that time the practice prevailed of having all things common. We observe, therefore, that *voluntary poverty*, as a general practice, prevailed only for a short time under peculiar pressure, and was never compulsory; that when practised it was within the Church, and not out of it; but that when embraced for the glory of God, it was accounted honourable in His sight, and no doubt where the motives are pure it always is so. This statement of facts leads us the better to understand in what the sin of Ananias consisted. It was a double crime, involving both sacrilege and fraud. There

² 1 Tim. vi. 17.

was fraud in presenting one half of his possession, and implying that it was the whole; there was sacrilege in pretending to present it to the Church and the clergy, and through them to God. For inasmuch as it was placed under the care of the Apostles, it became sacred; and the fraudulent keeping back of any part of it was therefore a sacrilegious act. And this fraud and sacrilege were rendered far worse by the time when the sin was committed, that is, when the Church was under the immediate and miraculous guidance of the Holy Ghost, who had just descended on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. So that whether we consider the double crime itself, lying and sacrilege, two of the most foul sins that can pollute the human heart, or whether we take into account the fact of the peril to which the Gospel was then exposed, or the commission which the Apostles bore, or the visible guidance of God the Holy Ghost, it would seem to be an offence of the most complicated and atrocious kind, and, as such, deserving instant and condign punishment. And this seems evident from the remarkable words which St. Peter uses, "*Why hath Satan filled thine heart?*" words similar to those in which the Evangelist records the crime of Judas, "And after the sop Satan entered into him;" implying, as it would seem, a more than ordinary malignity, and

a surrender of his whole heart and soul to that accursed spirit, to be dealt with according to his will.

It is right to observe also, that neither Ananias nor his wife were guilty of a direct lie, but only of an equivocation; but so far was that from lessening the sin, that it seems to have increased it; for there is more deception and pretence about an equivocation, and therefore it is in one sense a worse act; and that should be a lesson to those who are often guilty of deception. When you prevaricate you *lie*, and liars are an abomination to Almighty God.

By this awful judgment which befel both Ananias and his wife, who not only shared her husband's guilt, but convicted herself (when St. Peter by his question gave her an opportunity of acknowledging her sin), the Apostles' authority was established, and their divine message fully attested; "of the rest," that is, as some suppose, of other believers, "durst no man join himself to them³." It is sometimes said, by those who make no scruple of showing their contempt for the clergy, show us such a miracle as that of St. Peter, and we will believe you. God forbid that we should be invested with such a power. But

³ Acts v. 13.

the cessation of miraculous power does not undermine the authority of our mission. Even our Lord Himself wrought not perpetual miracles, nor did He work any for those who would not believe. But having done it once, the sign once wrought is of perpetual designation, and the authority once committed can only be recalled by the same hand that gave it. Has He who said, "to the end of the world" ever recalled His words? Are not His gifts to His Church "without repentance?" So that our inference would be, that contempt and irreverence, if not so signally punished, are quite as offensive in the eyes of God as they were in the days of the infancy of the Church.

Let us again observe the signal proof here given of the Divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." So that if Ananias in lying to the Holy Ghost lied to God, which seems to be the meaning of the Apostle, the Holy Ghost is God. For how could Ananias lie to the Holy Ghost but as lying to Him, by whose authority the Apostles spoke and acted, which was in fact the authority of God?

Having thus noticed some of the principal points in the history before us, let us for our

instruction consider what may be drawn from the several facts here related.

First, That what we give to the Church we give to God. This is a great principle, which it would be well if Christians could more clearly see and act upon; for it would tend greatly to promote the cheerfulness of giving. "God loveth a cheerful giver." Now too many when they give, give reluctantly; their gifts seem, as it were, wrung from their very bowels, as if they were parting with their heart's blood, their very charities are a sore burden to them; instead of rejoicing to minister to Christ and His spouse, they lament over every call, murmur at every application, and when they come to the end of the year, complain that they should have so much to give. This kind of compulsory charity is hardly worth acceptance.

"Freely Thou givest, gracious Lord,
Freely Thy gifts should be restored;
He only who forgets to hoard
Has learned to live ⁴."

But how little are we moved by the love of Christ, or with the transporting thought of giving to our Maker, if we give grudgingly! Our Lord

⁴ Christian Year.

said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive⁵," more blessed in the act, which more resembles God; more blessed in the disposition which it fosters; more blessed in the hope of His approbation; and therefore, if we value His words, if we are in real earnest about our religion, we shall act on our Lord's principles.

Secondly, This passage also warns us, when we have promised to God, never to draw back from our promise. "It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry⁶." "Pay that which thou hast vowed⁷." The sin of sacrilege may be committed in many ways; either by directly laying hands on God's property, as many of the nobility did at the time of the Reformation, or by giving to God only a portion of what is His, as those do who try to defraud and take away from the Church as much as they can; or it may be committed by those who steal and convert to their own uses the goods and ornaments of the Church, as people have been doing ever since the Reformation to this very hour; and perhaps there never was a nation more tainted with that foul sin of sacrilege than our own. What would our ancestors say, if they could rise up and see the shameful things we, as

⁵ Acts xx. 35.⁶ Prov. xx. 25.⁷ Eccles. v. 4.

a nation, have done? Their graves dishonoured, their names blotted out of the brass for very covetousness sold and melted down, their memorials all mildewed and rusted, their churches emptied of all that was seemly, solemn, and glorious, and filled with seats, for the benefit of those who now and then come to church, to the exclusion of many who would be always there; whilst amidst increasing luxury there is scarcely now one single church or cathedral in as good a state as they left it. Yet, we who have done all this wickedness (for sacrilegious wickedness it is) boast of our good deeds, cast reproach upon their memory, and speak of them with contemptuous insult, as ignorant idolaters. "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"

But, alas! no man feels that he is responsible for national sins, and we shift the responsibility on our rulers, or on one another. The Bible will teach us to apply to ourselves individually the sins of the nation. Let us recall to our minds the prayers of Nehemiah and Daniel, "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee;" and let the punishment of Ananias make us fear lest we be counted guilty of so great a sin.

^a Rom. ii. 22.

^b Dan. ix. 8. Neh. ix. 32.

Thirdly, we learn also that dissembling with God in any way is most hateful in His sight. Sacrilege is odious, but so likewise is hypocrisy. Let us who come to the Lord's table, pray earnestly that we may be delivered from this sin. For if among mankind no persons are so thoroughly disliked as those who artfully fawn upon us with pretended blandishments, whose words "are smoother than oil, yet be they very swords," what must our services seem in the eyes of Him to whom we must give account, if they be offered without any real earnestness and sincerity? Even the most sincere have many a foolish wandering thought, many an unclean offering to mourn over, and pray God's forgiveness of it, for Christ's sake; but how shall those appear before Him in the dread summons to judgment, who have come to church to sport, to play, to turn the service into a mockery, to laugh at others when they should weep for themselves, to jest at the very foot of the throne of the infinite all-seeing God? Or how shall any of us venture to ask for mercy, if with profane mouths, malicious breasts, or careless, heartless indevotion, we have come up to the Lord's own table, and there bowed the knee before Him in scorn, as the Gentile of old, and taken into our hands what might have conveyed to us the Body and Blood of the Lord? How miserable

must he be who so comes, and feeds on bread and wine and nothing more—sent empty away without Christ as his Divine and heavenly food, a godless worshipper in God's own dwelling-place, deaf to the hymn of angels, blind to Christ, his true and only light, regardless of the Spirit's frequent call; without love, where all is love around!

Yet the existence of such evils, which not even the strictest discipline can wholly prevent, must not deter the sincere and earnest Christian from approaching. Painfully conscious of sins which admit of no valid excuse, of infirmities of mind as well as of body, of weakness, indecision, forgetfulness of duty, and vanity in the performance of it, still he presses on to the saving fount of mercy, and asks for "help in time of need." He sees this cordial for his wounds, this staff of life, this means of intimate union with his Incarnate God, who is the very truth and life itself. He knows himself sincere, though feeble; earnest, though inconsistent; and resolved to "resist the devil, that he may flee from him." He stretches forth his hand, and cries with trembling awe, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief¹." Lord, teach me to trust in Thee, to fear Thee, to praise Thee, to offer the incense of a grateful heart, and, above

¹ Mark ix. 24.

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all, rightly to receive Thee, perfectly to love and to obey Thee! My heart is empty, and longs for Thee to fill it, to possess it wholly, to raise it above the stream of sensual, grovelling affections, and make it the abode of purity, lowliness, and peace.

Brethren, are you thus coming to your Saviour's presence? Think when you approach you see HIM there; the heavens unveiled; the angels standing around in solemn awe; the Son of man inquiring of each communicant, "Lovest thou Me?" "If ye love Me, keep My commandments²."

² John xiv. 15.

SERMON XXV.

ON CHURCH MUSIC.

ISAIAH vi. 3.

“ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts : the whole earth is full of His glory.”

THE responsive system of music in use in our cathedrals, and not in our cathedrals only, but generally throughout Christendom, has been supposed to have come down to us from the time of St. Ignatius, who is said first to have taught the Christian Church at Antioch to sing alternate verses of Psalms in responsive strains. But, as the great Hooker justly observes, even were this tradition not trustworthy, we may trace the custom to higher authority than St. Ignatius, even to the blessed angels themselves, whom the prophet Isaiah, in the vision recorded in this chapter, describes as singing the praise of Jehovah of Hosts in alternate choirs. For “one cried to another,” or, as the margin more literally and more forcibly expresses

it, this angel cried to this; which cannot be more clearly interpreted than by reference to a custom which carries with it the Divine authority of Him who regulated all things in the Jewish Church according to a heavenly pattern, and whose example has been therefore most properly followed in the Christian. It may be, therefore, not uninteresting, nor unsuitable to a discourse delivered in this place¹, to show how fully the system of responsive cathedral music fulfils the apparent intentions of the Heavenly mind, agrees with the practice of the Jewish and primitive Church, and brings out more satisfactorily than any other method the sense of Holy Writ itself. Few persons, I suppose, at all endowed with nature's eye, ever enter a cathedral, without some unbidden homage of awe, veneration, and delight. God's majesty and man's littleness are the dominant ideas which prevail, and the mere curiosity of discovery is subdued by feelings of a more chaste and holy nature. So it seems to be with cathedral music. Other harmonies ravish and entrance the soul, and seem to bid it float away into some unknown region of ecstasy, far above the din and tumult of sublunary things. But these feelings may be (as they are accused of being) dependent chiefly on *sense*. There may be (and doubtless there is)

¹ This Sermon was preached in Exeter Cathedral.

in many instances, a mere voluptuous luxury of hearing, the lust of the ear, which makes no more use of concord of sweet sounds, than does the ordinary visitor to the cathedral of those symbols of *reverence, faith, and love*, which are visible around him. But there is something deeper in the external beauty, as well as in the solemn music of our cathedrals. And if it can be shown that the manner of performing the service is in accordance with the genius (if we may so speak) of the holy volume itself, it is plain there must be important lessons in it, to serve the highest efforts of the really spiritual mind.

Chanting, then, in its largest signification, may be divided into three kinds. First, that gentle, plaintive, and supplicatory intonation, or, as Hooker terms it, "melodious pronunciation," which belongs to the priest who leads the devotions of the people; of which there is not, as far as I am aware, any direct authority in the Holy Scriptures, but which is recommended by the earliest usage of the primitive Church, by its suitableness to acts of supplication and intercession, and by its enabling the speaker to be well heard at a considerable distance. Secondly, the system of responsive chanting of the Psalms, and other parts of Holy Writ, for which those parts seem designedly written, and of which we have numerous instances in the Scripture: and, thirdly, the chant swelling

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out into the fulness of the anthem, implying greater intenseness of expression, either of joy or grief, and a more complicated variety of parts, but still preserving the responsive form. For this also there is ample Scripture authority. The writer of the second book of Chronicles thus describes the dedication of Solomon's temple: "It came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, (where they had deposited the ark of the Lord,) also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, (the great leaders of the choir, in fact the precentors,) being arrayed in white linen, (according to the order still observed in our cathedrals,) having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, (or, as we should say, in the choir,) and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets; it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, (singing in full chorus,) to make one sound, to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord²."

² 2 Chron. v. 11—13.

Now, with the slight difference of the use of the organ, which comprehends in its own fulness the variety of the combined Jewish instruments, we have here a complete cathedral choir and a perfect Christian anthem performed in the middle of the service, before the king addressed the whole assembled congregation; and the choice of the subject shows that it was executed in the same responsive way with which the 136th Psalm, or any other part of the Psalms, would still be performed in our own times. Nay, it is remarkable that when an express revelation was made to the beloved disciple of mysteries too great to be at once unfolded, the glimpse of the heavenly glory contains a similar picture, and similar expressions; "I heard a voice as the voice of many waters," deep, solemn, combined, multitudinous, but in unison; I heard "the voice of harpers harping with their harps³." "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints⁴;" where we observe not only singing by a number of voices, but the same responsive form in the selected words. But without entering into conjectures respecting heavenly things, let us consider how

³ Rev. xiv. 2.⁴ Rev. xv. 3.

the responsive chant still used is adapted to the structure and mode of expression of the Scriptures themselves.

A very large part of the sacred volume is, as is well known, written in poetry; almost all the book of Job, the whole of the Psalms, the chief part of all the prophets, and many portions of the other books, being entirely poetical, and even the historical books partaking in a considerable degree of the same form, which distinguishes the poetry of the Hebrews from that of most ancient nations. Now Hebrew poetry differs from the poetry of the Greeks and Romans, and from our own, in this remarkable respect; it has a kind of melody without having metre. It possesses a certain definite and harmonious arrangement of syllables, without the consonance of sound in which English poets delight, and even without that peculiar modulation which is characteristic of the Latins and Greeks. Bishop Jebb justly observes that the arrangement of Hebrew poetry is made with reference to the sense, not to the sound. "Classical poetry," he observes, "is the poetry of one language, of one people; Hebrew poetry is universal poetry; the collocation of the words is directed to secure the clearest announcement of the sense; nothing is sacrificed to metrical necessity, so that let a translator be only literal,

and preserve the original order of the words, and he will put the reader in possession of nearly all that the Hebrew text can give to the Hebrew scholar." The characteristic of Hebrew poetry, then, is parallelism; that is, a certain equality or resemblance between two or more lines of the same sentence, so that things answer to things and words to words, either by agreement or by opposition to each other.

To illustrate this (which to some here present may be obscure) by a few brief examples:—

The principal kinds of parallelism in the Scriptures are three,—the synonymous parallelism, the antithetic parallelism, the gradational or constructive parallelism.

First, in the synonymous parallelism we have similar ideas conveyed in different but nearly equivalent terms, and this, generally speaking, in a stanza of two lines, as in the Psalm for the morning service:—

“ O come, let us sing unto the Lord;

Let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our
salvation :

Let us come before His presence with thanks-
giving ;

And show ourselves glad in Him with psalms ⁵.”

⁵ Ps. xciv. 1, 2.

Here each line answers to that which preceded it, not in exact length of syllables, but in *sense*; the latter being generally somewhat stronger than the preceding, but nearly synonymous with it. Of this we have numerous instances in the book of Proverbs, as,—

“ Her ways are ways of pleasantness;
And all her paths are peace ⁶. ”

And in the New Testament an example in the song of the blessed Virgin :—

“ My soul doth magnify the Lord;
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour ⁷. ”

Of the antithetic parallelism we have numerous instances in the Psalms, but especially in the Proverbs. Here there is an opposition of sense to sense, word to word, in the two propositions; as,—

“ A true witness delivereth souls :
But a deceitful witness speaketh lies ⁸. ”

And—

“ Righteousness exalteth a nation :
But sin is a reproach to any people ⁹. ”

The degrees of antithesis are various, but the principle is the same.

We have, thirdly, the gradational or construc-

⁶ Prov. iii. 17.

⁷ Luke i. 46, 47.

⁸ Prov. xiv. 25.

⁹ Prov. xiv. 34.

tive parallelism, which is very common. The first Psalm is a notable instance of it:—

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the
counsel of the ungodly,

Nor standeth in the way of sinners,

Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful¹⁰ ;”

each member of the sentence rising to some higher point of wickedness which the good man will avoid. The same form of parallel is often used in the book of Job, as,—

“Hast thou given the horse strength ?

Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder ?

Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper ?

The glory of his nostrils is terrible.

He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his
strength :

He goeth on to meet the armed men.

He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted ;

Neither turneth he back from the sword¹.”

We have another fine instance of it in Isaiah :

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen ;

To loose the bands of wickedness,

To undo the heavy burdens,

And to let the oppressed go free,

And that ye break every yoke ?

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry,

¹⁰ Ps. i. 1.

¹ Job xxxix. 19—22.

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And that thou bring the poor that are cast out
to thy house ?

When thou seest the naked that thou cover
him ;

And that thou hide not thyself from thine own
flesh ?”

There is no necessity to multiply instances, for
the same things are observable in all—a rise or
gradation in the sense from member to member,
each member containing some accumulation of
the original idea, which is preserved unbroken in
the construction of the whole period.

These, then, are the principal forms of paral-
lelism in the Hebrew poetry. In all we see a
forcible sententious way of expression, capable of
easy translation into another language, but re-
quiring in music something peculiar and of its
own kind to give it force and effect. And this is
attained in no way so well as by the responsive
method of chanting. This will be seen at once
by any one who attentively reads the 24th Psalm,
where the alternate method is most clearly seen.
There, as the ark approaches the holy hill of Sion,
one part of the choir exclaim,

“ Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ?

Or who shall stand in His holy place ?”

The other part give the answer,

“ He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.”

Again, as the ark enters its place, one part of the priests say,

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates: even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”

“Who is this King of glory?” ask the alternate singers:

“The Lord of Hosts,” is the reply; “He is the King of glory².”

Now let these words be reduced to ordinary English metre, as in our singing Psalms, and they lose great part of their force and beauty, because in metre, where the poet is tied to the necessities of rhyme, he must sacrifice the collocation, the sententious, and, as has been well said, the lightning-like force of the original. But in the chant all this is preserved, and admirably preserved.

The parallelism absolutely synonymous, if there be any such, is preserved in the single chant. The parallelism in which the latter member of the sentence varies a little, though very little, from the former, is preserved in those chants in which the latter half of the music answers nearly to the former, with the exception of the latter chords. The antithetic parallel is preserved in those chants where the latter members consist not only of different, but as it were opposing

² Ps. xxiv. 3, 4, 9, 10.

strains, though in the same key; and the gradational and constructive parallelism is worked out in the anthem, which admits of greater length. At all events, the responsive method brings out the sententious fulness of the sacred word as no other method could bring it out, without any reconstruction or dislocation of the words.

Seeing, then, that there is a kind of natural aptness in the chant to express the words of the Hebrew poets; seeing that the Jews themselves, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, so sang the sweet strains of the Psalms; seeing that our Saviour on the eve of His passion sang a Psalm or collection of Psalms of the same kind, (viz. Psalm 113 to 118, or the great Hallel, as is generally supposed,) and, as it seems probable, in the same manner; seeing that the Christian Church, from the earliest ages, has adopted the method, we have every reason for believing it the best "for conveying the treasure of good things to our minds, and inflaming our devotion towards Almighty God."

But not to omit the practical part of this important subject, we may say something on the music itself, on the manner in which it should be performed, and on our own duties who engage in it.

First, the kind of music is dictated by the

words which are to be sung ; no light and operative strains become the solemn words of men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Shall we sing the subjects of the Psalms, or the birth, the sufferings, and the victories of the Son of God, the conflicts of His Church, the mercies of His covenant-love, the dread realities of an approaching judgment, the glories of heaven, the terrors of hell, in strains of light and earthly festivity ? These surely require a severe and masculine style, a sober, dignified, awful devotion. The strains which delight the world are foreign to the Church, and should be banished from her walls. The sententious gravity, solemn grandeur, and rich fulness of the words to be sung, dictate beyond all question the kind of music to which those words are to be set ; a kind which is as distinct from all other music as the Bible is distinct from every other kind of writing. Happily, there is no lack of such music in the works of our older masters, and never was the saying of our Saviour more appropriate than in reference to this subject, that "No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new ; for he saith, The old is better³."

Secondly, if the music should be of a holy kind, what manner of persons ought those who engage

³ Luke v. 39.

in it to be? If they who sing in the presence of kings think no pains too great, no labour ill-bestowed in winning the favour of princes, or in earning the paltry and perishable recompense of a little silver and gold,—ye who utter God's own words in the presence of God Himself, what ought ye to be? No hurried, careless manner, no indevout gesture, becomes you; the word which ye utter is that which will waft thousands into heaven, and cast down many souls into eternal fire. The songs which ye sing are the songs of angels and just spirits before the throne of God, and require a just man's pains to do them justice. And I would beseech the youngest amongst you to think of this. You are not too young to set a good example to some that are your elders, as well as to profit by the example of some that are your elders. Young as you are, you know not to how many pious persons you may give offence, and give them a dislike to the very system under which you live, if you perform the service in a hurried, unchristian manner. Samuel was even younger than you when he lay down in his place in the temple of the Lord, and heard God calling to him, "Samuel, Samuel," and he answered, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth⁴." This

⁴ 1 Sam. iii. 10.

Samuel was in the temple from a child; and though a child in years, he was a man in grace, and meekness, and godliness; and when he became an old man, he had all the freshness and simplicity of a child. Remember, then, that you are responsible to God for what has now been said to you. And while, indeed, the noble system of chanting and singing one to another the high praises of our God should make us all beware lest we "offer the sacrifice of fools," it should also make us "joyful in the house of prayer."

What solemn associations, what inspiring thoughts are here; what high illustrious names have trod these aisles, meditated beneath these ancient walls, and listened with a trembling joy to the alternate strains that echoed from this glorious roof! Their memorials still repose in hallowed silence round us; but their record is on high; their names are written in heaven; their spirits, in the calm of that unbroken rest, look out for the morning of the resurrection-day. They who have trod the pilgrim's path before us, are still linked with us in the most endearing ties; our Redeemer is the same, our brotherhood is the same, our Father's home is one and the same. There, if we follow the faith and patience of the saints, we yet shall meet: where they that built the house and they that worshipped

in it shall be one: where "he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together."

Here below, the visible Church is larger than the invisible; the finest voices may conceal the vilest hearts, the best and most pious may be the most unmelodious. But there all hearts and all voices shall be in tune; the instruments shall be as perfect as the worship shall be spiritual and true. For "who are these arrayed in white robes? and whence come they? These are they that came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes⁵."

⁵ Rev. vii. 13—17.

SERMON XXVI.

THE MINISTERIAL COMMISSION.

ST. JOHN vi. 70, 71.

“Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon : for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve.”

THE character of Judas Iscariot is shrouded in dark and awful mystery. Of his history, previous to his call to the Apostleship, we know nothing ; of his life during his ministry we know nothing, and only a few intimations are given of that secret mystery of wickedness which was working in his heart during his intercourse with our blessed Lord, and which ended in Satan filling his heart to be the betrayer of his Maker. It would seem probable, however, that Judas displayed the tendency of his mind at an early period of his ministry, and in the same year in which our Lord ordained him ; for the narrative in the chapter is supposed to relate to the events occur-

ring shortly after the ordination of the Apostles, and in the second year of our Lord's ministry. What kind of man Judas was at the time of his ordination we are not told, but reverence forbids our supposing that our blessed Lord laid hands on any one so entirely unfitted for the work of an Evangelist as Judas proved himself afterwards to be. The temptation of covetousness seems to have beset him afterwards. Yet, be this as it may, the facts of the history are these. That our blessed Saviour, on His laying the foundation of the Christian Church, chose, ordained, and sent forth one who in a very short time proved himself a son of perdition, a man dead to every good principle, blinded by avarice, and sold to Satan. Such a man, though warned of his sins, and severely re-proved for them, was permitted still to occupy his station among the Apostles, still to hold his commission, and to be ranked among the twelve. For our Lord's words are, "Have not I chosen you twelve?" (Judas being among the number,) "and one of you is a devil." Two most important lessons are obviously to be drawn from the history; first, as regards ourselves as ministers, that there is no greater sin in us than covetousness, none which seems so thoroughly to blind the eyes and steel the heart against good impressions, none which exercises a more fatal power over the mind,

inasmuch as it planned and wrought the greatest crime in the world's bad history, the betrayal and murder of the eternal Son of God. Secondly, as regards the people, it should surely be a lesson to you not to judge (as is the way of the world) by mere outward appearances. Judas was obviously not marked as a bad man by any thing outward; his fellow-apostles seem to have been ignorant of his character; his covetousness was dissembled under a mask of piety and zeal for the interests of the poor; none but the Lord Himself knew of it, it was no open flagrant transgression. "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God¹." But we may also connect the words with the two Articles which I design to explain this morning, the 23rd and 26th, especially with the latter of them, the subject of which is the unworthiness of evil ministers.

Art. XXIII.—"It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."

Art. xxvi.—"Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by His commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God, and in receiving of the sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.

"Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed."

Now the 23rd Article treats of a very important subject—the ministerial commission and authority; not only important as regards us, but

as regards your own happiness and comfort as the sheep of Christ's flock. For if we are not assured that we are your true and lawful pastors, if we have no right and title to minister to you, if we are intruders into the fold, and come in by some other way, and not by the door, then what business have you here? What comfort can you have in our ministrations? What security can you have that you are not blinded and deluded, and we blind leaders of the blind? If there be no mark, no title to the ministry by which you may know a true pastor from an untrue, what security can you have that this is God's house, in the which it pleaseth Him to dwell, and that here ye "may with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation²?" What mark then would you set upon us by which you may know this? Would you take the common popular notion of a comfortable minister, an awakening minister, a persuasive preacher, an eloquent orator? Alas! these marks are blind guides, for a man may be all this, and yet be but as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal³."

Would you take, then, the better test of a holy and religious life? This is, indeed, a sure test of our faithfulness or unfaithfulness, but it is not the only test you require; for Judas was an

² Isa. xii. 3.

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

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Apostle, and was sent forth to preach, and to work miracles. And our Lord who bids us apply the very test, "by their fruits shall ye know them," nevertheless says, "the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not⁴." They were to know them by their fruits, and so refuse to copy their example, and yet they were to observe and do all that they bid them, because they sat in Moses' chair, and so had a divine commission. They were to be listened to as ambassadors, but shunned as examples. Their words were fair, but their practice was bad. Hear and do after the one, hate and avoid the other. Indeed, if all the people's comfort depended on the actions and intentions of the minister, what lasting comfort could you have? Is our faithfulness or unfaithfulness to be made the measure of your growth in grace? If you come hungering and thirsting after the bread and water of life, are you to be sent empty away, because your minister cannot rightly feed you? This, indeed, is a commonly received notion, but it seems to be as unscriptural and pernicious an error as can be conceived.

⁴ Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

Are God's ordinances dependent on us? Are our intentions, our fancies, our feelings, our manifold infirmities, to be the measure of your blessings? What a dreadful delusion is this! In what a pitiable situation are the sheep of Christ, if this be true! According to this doctrine, if a minister make use of the baptismal service, and believe not the words he uses, then no grace accompanies the act of faith; if a minister administer the sacred elements, and is in his heart polluted or a traitor, then no blessing descends on faithful, humble souls; if a minister read prayers without praying, then no answer is vouchsafed those who pray themselves; in fact, this vicarious religion depends on the good-will of another, and that other a mere man, of like passions with yourselves, and as prone to fall as yourselves are. This error exalts the man at the expense of the ordinances of Christ; it exalts the man, and forgets the God who saves; and yet do we not hear this every day? "I shall not go to church to-day, because my favourite minister does not preach." "I shall not attend the Holy Communion, because our minister does not act as he preaches." And are you justified in the neglect of your duty, because another neglects his? Shall man be exalted in the place of God? Is it not God's word you hear read, God's ordinances you partake of, the Lord's table

at which you kneel, Christ's body and blood that are reverently offered you? Is not this what the prophet Ezekiel spake of, when God said unto him, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them^s?" My brethren, let me warn you to beware how you indulge in such manner of speech. The more you make an idol of man, the less will you love God; the more you set up us, the less good will you derive from the ordinances as such. You may be thankful if what you have heard preached is any way useful or a comfort to you, God grant it may be so! but your great comfort ought to be from the Scripture read, from prayer offered, from the Lord's Supper administered; and in these you should think of *your Lord*, not of *us*, the mere servants and instruments of the Lord. The grace is His, not ours; and if you depend on us, not on Him, you will find nothing; and, for my part, I had rather a thousand times take my place with the lowest among you, than in any way countenance the delusion of making an idol of man. And if I have in any way ever done or said any thing which might foster this notion, I humbly pray God

^s Ezek. xiv. 3.

to forgive it. Well then, if we are not to depend on man as a mere idol of our own making, as is the popular notion, what are we to depend on? We are to look to God's commission and authority, and depend on that as our security for a lawfully-constituted pastor, and we are to receive him as the ambassador of Christ; and if he be inefficient, ignorant, or unfaithful, we are to look to God for His blessing upon the means of grace, which, as a pastor does not make, he cannot unmake, nor deprive us of the blessing conveyed by a right use of such means.

How then may we know whether a pastor be lawfully called or no? Here you see the Article directs us:—First, no man is a true pastor who takes on himself the office of preaching or administering the Sacraments in the congregation, without a lawful call; and what is a lawful call? “Those,” says the Article, “we judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.” And who are those who have public authority given to them in the congregation? The answer you will find where you might expect to see it, in the preface to the ordination service. “It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors,

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that from the Apostles' time, there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church; bishops, priests, and deacons. Which offices were evermore had in reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also, by public prayers with imposition of hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful authority." This, in the judgment of the compilers of the Prayer-book, settles the question, and shows that no man can be pronounced lawfully called and sent (where the means of such calling are afforded) who is not rightly ordained by the bishop of the Church. We are not discussing the case of those, who, in other countries, may have somewhat to say for themselves; we speak of our own nation, where a lawful succession of pastors can be with perfect accuracy traced up to the Apostles, where there were always bishops; and in this country we fearlessly appeal to the Article and the ordination service as declaring what is a lawful call. Nor is Holy Scripture silent upon this matter. The Jewish Church was formed according to the pattern given by God Himself. Was there not a peculiar care, a special promise made for the line of priesthood, and that in a particular family, to ensure its sta-

bility, and to make it lasting? Was any chance person permitted to take on himself the order of Aaron, without being set apart by solemn rites? Does not the book of Leviticus show with what minute exactness all things were to be done, according to the pattern which God showed Moses in the mount. And if these things be typical of our dispensations, can we suppose that less care is requisite in a purer dispensation? Further, when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram brake in on this established order, was there no severe punishment that followed that presumption?

But what are the facts of the case? When our Lord laid the foundation of the Church, did He say to all the multitude that heard Him, let every one of you take on himself the office of minister, be all of you Apostles, let all preach, let all cast out devils, let all go forth with My commission? On the contrary, after solemn and intense prayer He chose only twelve, whom He named Apostles, and after these other seventy also, and His commission to them is given at several times, in terms so weighty, so awful, and so exclusive, that language has no terms in which a greater degree of authority and dignity could be assigned. He said to Peter, "Behold, I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be

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bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven⁶." He said also to the twelve, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained⁷." "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world⁸." It is wonderful how very irreverently persons who affect to know the Bible by heart pass over such expressions as these! Is it not gross trifling with these texts, to suppose that our Lord meant to extend them to all Christians alike, that such expressions are become obsolete, and now have no meaning at all? Yet if they applied to all, why was Matthias elected into the number of the twelve when Judas was dead?

Let us again turn to the Acts of the Apostles. There we find the deacons baptizing, but the Apostles going down to confirm and ordain; we find St. Paul appointing Timothy as bishop of Ephesus, with power to do the "work of a

⁶ Matt. xvi. 19.⁷ John xx. 23.⁸ Matt. xxviii. 20.

bishop;" and from this time, the succession of pastors, founded by the primitive Christians with the most jealous care, has descended to us. Should any one imagine that in times of confusion and disorder some mistakes might have been made, some links in the chain been wanting, we answer, the ancient writers thought nothing of more importance than preserving the list entire. It was this witness to which they constantly appealed to distinguish themselves from heretics; although even were a link wanting, through mere defect of copies, it would not, in the eyes of a fair reasoner, vitiate the succession. For who would doubt the line of English kings, merely because the name of some one Saxon monarch could not be found? However, in the case of the bishops, the evidence is far stronger, from there being so many independent lines all converging to one point, and tracing their origin to one stock.

This, then, is the security you have for the *lawfulness* of our ministration; as to your faithfulness, your comfort, it does not depend wholly on that. Seek you God's grace in the use of God's means, and when we be unfaithful, which God forbid! nevertheless you shall find it. But beware how you rest your peace on the weak foundation of a creature-good, for it will fail you; whereas, if, knowing your pastor to be

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lawfully called, you follow him as far as he follows Christ, but look above him to those means which the Lord Himself has promised to bless, you will be sure to obtain a blessing, you will "go in and out, and find pasture." I ask any honest mind among you, whether the words of the Article do not express the very self-same truth I am now delivering to you: "yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by His commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving of the Sacraments? Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."

Undoubtedly, as the Article proceeds to say, "it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused of those that have knowledge of their offences; and, finally, being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed⁹." But this is one part of that discipline which the Church earnestly

⁹ Article XXVI.

wishes to restore, but which circumstances have hitherto prevented her from restoring. May God grant that a more wholesome state of discipline may, in His good time, be permitted to prevail among us!

Finally, we learn from the whole subject, to think more deeply of our own separate responsibilities as ministers and people, and pray for each other. Every man, my brethren, may easily set himself up as a judge. Now, to be a judge requires judgment, learning, charity, and discretion. To seem so in our own eyes requires very little of either.

But instead of judging, if you value your own comfort, if you wish for our usefulness, if you love the peace and unity and fruitfulness of the Church, "*pray for us.*" More will be done by prayer than by criticism. A humble, quiet temper, a subdued and reverent spirit, a loving heart, a pure and blameless life, are worth all the criticism in the world. Let us each mutually remember that we shall stand at the judgment-seat of our common Lord; that we shall all, whatever be our present attainments, then stand in need of mercy. Let the thought of that "fiery trial" make us "judge ourselves, that we be not judged;" and strive, by the discharge of our respective duties in the faith and fear of God,

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and in dependence on His seasonable aid, that we may be "found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

In short, let us judge less; let us love, and believe, and obey more.

SERMON XXVII.

THE BLESSINGS BESTOWED ON THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

DEUT. iv. 32—36.

“For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth ; and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it ? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live ? Or hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes ? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God ; there is none else beside Him. Out of heaven He made thee to hear His voice, that He might instruct thee : and upon earth He shewed thee His great fire ; and thou heardest His words out of the midst of the fire.”

Few parts of the books of Moses are more sublime, more affecting, and more instructive, than the chapter we have read this morning. It is

impossible to read it, I imagine, without feeling that Moses was indeed, as St. Stephen has described him, mighty in *words*, as well as in deeds. We gain from it also a higher notion of what Moses gave up when he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season¹." There is something, too, peculiarly touching in some of the expressions of the great lawgiver. When we hear him say, "But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan²;" we seem to enter into all the yearnings of his mind. It was for this people he had sacrificed all that the world counts dear; he had given up all the dreams of a fond ambition, all the stores of Egyptian learning, all the fame and reputation of the greatest court in the world; he had taken in exchange persecution and poverty, he had wearied himself for forty years with the ignorance, rebellion, the dogged stubbornness of a nation retaining all the vices of slaves amidst their emancipation from slavery; he was now a very aged man, he had but one wish left, that he might lead his people into the land to the borders of which he had conducted them, and that after all their wanderings, he might lie down and die in the midst of his people. This

¹ Heb. xi. 25.² Deut. iv. 22.

natural wish was, however, to be denied him ; but so far from murmuring at the Divine will, he records the reason of it, viz. a want of acknowledgment of God before the people, and some fretfulness and impatience on the part of himself and Aaron ; and, along with that record, he only leaves us the expression of his own sorrowful but subdued feeling, mixed with joy on the people's account ; " I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan ; but ye shall go over and possess the land ³." But, besides this, there is abundance of instruction to be gathered from the chapter ; and, without entering into all that might be said upon it, I design in the present discourse to consider it in two points of view :—

First, I shall explain the words of the text itself ; and, secondly, point out the resemblance of our own privileges, as a Christian people, to those of the Jews. As regards the Jews, then, let us observe the points to which Moses refers. He bids them search into times gone by, inquire into the history of every nation under heaven, whether any such events had ever taken place in the world as these which themselves had seen, and in which they had been the principal agents.

" Ask of the times that are past." It is a good

³ Deut. iv. 22.

thing to make the mind familiar with past history, and the paths of Providence in times before us. If we are only acquainted with present times, we are too much influenced by present things to be able to form a right judgment of our real position. True wisdom can only be gained by looking back to the past, and forward to the future, and so shaping our course for the present. Thus Jeremiah says, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old path, where is the good way, and walk therein;" and he names the result, "and ye shall find rest for your souls⁴."

There are two points, then, to which Moses bids them look back. The first is the giving of the law from Mount Sinai: "Did ever people hear the voice of God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?"

To the world God speaks by the universal language of His works. "There is," says the Psalmist, "no place where His voice is not heard⁵;" and this voice is in the heavens and in the earth, in the sea and in the sky, in the field and in the chamber, in the height and in the depth, in infinite greatness and infinite littleness. But it is a voice which may be rather felt than heard, and which is unknown to a vast multitude of mankind.

⁴ Jer. vi. 16.⁵ Psalm xix. 3.

But God spake to the Israelites with the voice of men, only far louder and more tremendous ; a voice so terrible, that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake⁶." But there was not only a voice, and that uttering the Ten Commandments, but darkness, and fire more vivid than the lightning to make the darkness more terrible, and a fearful thunderstorm, and an earthquake. Never any people heard or saw the like ; and yet, though Nature trembled at the presence of her God, the Israelites stood unharmed and heard it all. This was without precedent. Such honour no nation beside had ever enjoyed.

But was this all ? No ; he bids them look back to what had preceded this appearance, viz. to their exodus, or departure from Egypt. He recalls to their minds the river swollen not with water but with blood, the plague of tormenting and resistless insects, the vain attempts of the magicians to counterfeit them, the cattle dying by thousands in the fields, the sweeping hail that destroyed all the green vegetables, the ravenous swarms of locusts that devoured what the hail had spared, the more terrible darkness that seemed to consign the Egyptians to the tomb, while light shone upon the dwellings of Goshen, and the

⁶ Heb. xii. 21.

desolation of Egypt at the death of the first-born. He bids them look back to that morning, when, as the tyrant of Egypt was midway between his own and the opposite shore, his chariot-wheels broke under him, his army was thrown into confusion, and the waves which he had seen standing up like walls on either side rolled back, and with irresistible fury overwhelmed them all, "and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore⁷." These were the sights their eyes had seen—these the terrors by which they had been delivered, and could they now forget them? Could they prove so base, so ungrateful to their deliverer as to turn from the holy commands thus delivered unto them? Could they, who had heard a voice, but never seen any manner of similitude, worship, not that which they had seen, but that which was no similitude of God at all, a vain, senseless, dumb idol, that which their own hands had made, in which there was not even the breath of life, nor power to speak, to touch, to taste, to smell? And yet the words of the lawgiver, bidding them look back to the past, were a keen rebuke of their unfaithfulness, as well as the fearful prophecy of their future sins. For they had been guilty of this very sin of idolatry. They

⁷ Exod. xiv. 30.

had committed it within a month. Nay, the very brother of Moses had shared in it, and made the calf which the people had worshipped. And at the very time that they thus stood on the borders of that goodly land of promise, which they could only enter by fresh victories, and new marks of God's wondrous mercy towards them, the Spirit of God predicted, (as Moses more fully records in a subsequent chapter,) that that very land they would defile by their abominable idolatries, rivaling the heathen who had been cast out of it in the very crimes for which they had themselves expelled them, and be at last themselves cast out by the long-delayed but retributive justice of God.

What a picture is here ! What points of history are brought together by the pen of inspiration for our instruction ! Well may *we* look back to the past ; well may we consider the case of the Jews as a warning to ourselves ! Here we have in one and the self-same history, at one moment Israel emerging from the Red Sea, while the " Egyptians lie dead upon the shore ;" at another moment standing before Mount Sinai, listening to the terrible voice of God Himself ; within another month dancing amidst abhorred and licentious rites before the golden calf ; after forty years wandering for their sins, standing on the plains of

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Moab with the same great lawgiver at their head, who, as he beheld the river Jordan before him, and the mountain tops of the goodly land swelling on his sight, declared the solemn sentence on himself for his own lesser sin, "I must die in this land."

Then we have at another moment Israel, after their entrance into the very land, overfed, and giddy with prosperity, gradually corrupting themselves, sparing the Canaanites, mixing with them, learning their customs, setting up their idols; and finally, we behold the sure, though long-tarrying ruin overtaking them, and their very temple a heap of ashes, their city of God pillaged, sacked and burnt, their men destroyed or enslaved, their women and children led captive to Babylon, and a still more stubborn remnant hurrying away with them the prophet Jeremiah, who had vainly endeavoured to warn or terrify them from their wickedness, and after stoning him, themselves in great numbers going back to Egypt, and perishing there.

And is all this nothing to us? Indeed it is a fearful lesson; would that it were not in some respects a type of the Christian Church! and in this light, secondly, I propose to consider it.

It would detain us too long to go into the whole subject; after, therefore, a glance at our fall and sinfulness, I shall, on the present occasion,

dwell on our privileges still remaining to us as members of the Church of Christ in England.

First, then, of the fallen state of the Church Catholic in all lands. I speak not now of particular branches, more or less pure, but of the universal Church, which we must lament over as not yet brought to that state which Christ designed, and which we hope He may have yet in store for her, when all shall be one, when we shall no more be as children, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive⁸." But we are, alas! so accustomed to division, that we see little to mourn over in our fall. We think so little of other branches of the Church, that we forget the fearful breaches which have happened in Zion, the rending asunder of east and west, the jealousies, the corruptions, the angry contentions which have so long prevailed. But no truly Christian mind can soberly think over these things without deploring that such a state of things exists, whatever be the causes, even though he may not see the immediate remedies. We ought, then, daily, hourly, yearly, not only in public but in private, to pray for the peace and unity of the Church.

⁸ Ephes. iv. 14.

Let us recollect what the Psalmist says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee⁹;" and this applies to the Christian even more than to the Jewish Church. We may, I think, learn a lesson from our Roman Catholic brethren in foreign parts in this matter. It is said, that the Roman Catholics have agreed, in considerable numbers, to pray for the conversion of England. Now of course we cannot join in their prayers in the same sense in which they use them, but we may return their prayers, and pray for the conversion of Rome. It is a new thing to hear the Romish Church talking of prayer for conversion. Her former talk was of converting by fire and sword; and I think if their prayers be sincere, as I doubt not in many cases they are, God may be pleased to answer them in another manner than they expect, viz. by enabling Rome to see her own errors, which present so tremendous an obstacle in the way of the unity of the Church; and so, though we may not live to see it, our posterity may live to witness the re-union of the whole Church on a sound and Scriptural and primitive basis; and let every heart say, Amen, so be it.

But my object rather was to point out to you

⁹ Ps. cxxii. 6.

especially, as many may not have thought of the subject in this light, how very greatly God has blessed our branch of the Church, after a manner indeed, not dissimilar to that of the Jews. As a nation, indeed, God has signally and wonderfully blessed us. His selection of us, at one time a poor degraded race of savage men, trampled on or unheeded, at the uttermost ends of the earth, is most remarkable. The whole history of Britain, from the first landing of Cæsar on the shores to the present day, presents to the mind a combination of circumstances, though not so strictly miraculous, yet almost as wonderful as the history of the Jews. For if we think of the founding, the establishment, progress, trials, and present state of the Church amongst us,—what can be more marvellous or more providential?

The British Church was founded either by one of the Apostles, or by their immediate successors. British bishops assisted at one, if not more, of the first four general councils, and at several subordinate ones. But this early Church was confined to the extremities of the island, and was almost extinguished by the violence of the Saxons. Then came our second founding by Augustine, the missionary of the Bishop of Rome. But the British Church even then showed symptoms of its independence, and asserted its Catholic rights in a

manner which did it infinite honour, and which was in after ages to be put in practice on a larger scale at the Reformation. Long and vigorous were the struggles which both princes and priests of our Church made against the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome; and at length, in God's good time, the stand was made; and though the first author of that resistance was actuated by his own selfish and unchristian motives, yet it must never be forgotten, that the work was mainly accomplished by the Church itself.

And then, as to what appear to be the principles of the Reformation itself in doctrine and in discipline. It appears to be an endeavour to return, as far as the circumstances of the time would permit, to the doctrine and discipline of the primitive Church, as not only founded by apostolic men, and built on truth, but most agreeable to the real sense and meaning of Holy Scripture itself. The leading principle of the Reformation was, the right use of Holy Scripture; of Scripture, whose fundamental truths are embodied in the creeds, and whose best interpretation in the great doctrines of the Christian faith is found in the primitive Church. Hence our accusation against Rome has ever been, the introduction of novelties.

Consider what was to be removed, and what our

Church has retained. She has retained the Bible itself, as a book to be known and read of all men. She has retained the three creeds, as to be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture, and as the unadulterated and universally received sense of the whole Catholic Church. She has retained in reality the ancient liturgies, the sense and fulness of which are embodied in our Prayer-book. She gives honour to the four first general councils, which she esteems as of especial value in determining controversies of faith. She has retained the Catholic doctrine of the sacraments, rejecting the Puritan diminution of the one, and the Romish addition to the other. She has retained the order of Bishops as that of Christ's own appointment, of apostolic usage, and unbroken succession. She has retained all that can be proved necessary by the word of God, and universally received by the voice of the Church. — What then has she cast off? All Romish additions to the three creeds, which at once and for ever fixed the sense of Holy Scripture on those points; the supremacy of the pope over all Churches, as the visible centre of unity to Christendom; the doctrine of transubstantiation, of purgatory, of adoration of images, of communion in one kind, with other like errors. She has removed from her these errors, as having no Scrip-

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tural authority to recommend them, and the voice of the primitive Church absolutely against them. Thus in her Liturgy she strives, as far as may be, to reflect the image of the primitive Church, and bids us say, "I believe in the Catholic Church;" meaning, of which I am a member. In her Articles she enters a solemn protest against divers forms of error—first, and chiefly, against the novelties and corruptions of Rome; secondly, against those who deny the Divinity of Christ; thirdly, against those who undervalue or deny the grace of the Sacraments; fourthly, against those who refuse to submit to the authority and voice of the Church. When she teaches truth, she calls herself Catholic; when she protests against error, she is termed Protestant. And in so doing, she only exercises that right which St. Paul once exercised towards St. Peter, "withstanding him to the face, because he was to be blamed¹."

We have spoken of the principles of our Church; let us think on the *trials* of it. Those trials have been singularly severe, and yet most providentially ordered.

The persecution of Queen Mary showed clearly the line to be adopted in keeping clear of popery.

¹ Gal. ii. 11.

The fatal rebellion under king Charles developed the mischievous results of puritanism. Both evils were suffered to proceed to the very height, that our Church might be proved and preserved from both. After these there came upon her a worse evil, a time of spiritual declension and sluggishness, but from this God has awakened her. Her energies are roused. Her strength is put forth, not like that of Samson, when he arose to pull down the house upon his own head as well as on the heads of his enemies, but like that of the Psalmist when he exclaimed, "I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God, and make mention of His righteousness only²."

At such a time as this, are her sons to forsake her? At such a time as this, when north, south, east, and west, are calling on her to help them, when the fruits of the good seed are seen on the American shore, when her bishops are going out to repair the deficiencies in her colonies³, does it become us to be forgetful of the good hand of our God upon us? No; let us ask of the days that are past, whether God has ever blessed a Church and nation as He is blessing us, and surely that we may bless others, and impart to others what we have ourselves received.

² Ps. lxxi. 16.

³ These words have not been added at this time,

We do not favour the Church by labouring in her cause, but God favours us by permitting us to labour in His cause. We should regard it as a favour done to us, as a blessing, the value of which we cannot too highly estimate, to be allowed, in our small and narrow sphere, to work for God. What can any of us do for the Church, in comparison of that which God has done for us by her and in her? Let us keep, then, the example of the Jews before our eyes; let us flee from idolatry, which was their deadly sin; let us flee from the idolatry of corrupt *doctrine*, such as that wherewith we fear many members of the Church of Rome are entangled; let us flee from the idolatry of corrupt *practice*, such as too many of our own people have fallen into, who profess that they know God, but in works deny Him; let us flee from the idolatry of covetous mammon, which is the most ensnaring idol of all; let us remember, if we would avoid the fate of the Jews, that to make an idol of our money, is to despise the Church of God, to despise the Word of God, to despise God Himself, and in place of the everlasting riches of heaven, to cling to what cankers as we hoard it, flies from us as we pursue it, pierces our hearts through with a thousand sorrows when we clasp it to our bosoms, and leads us by sure, though unperceived steps, in the downward path to ruin.

SERMON XXVIII.¹

"I BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS."

HEBREWS xii. 22—24.

"But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

I ADDRESS you, my brethren and sisters in Christ our Lord, looking up to God for His help, but from the midst of no ordinary trial. Yet, painful as it is to me to speak to you at all, I can no longer hold my peace, though "my sorrow is stirred." I know by experience how soon good impressions fade away from the minds of those who are not actually suffering themselves, and perish more

¹ This and the following sermon would not have formed a part of this volume, but at the earnest request of some persons who had found comfort from the perusal, and expressed to me their conviction that others might find the same.

quickly than the leaf itself, whose withering they deplore ; and, therefore, I am anxious, while the impression remains, to do something to deepen it ;—not to let the most awful summons to myself pass without a warning voice from me : to make you, if possible, partakers both in my sorrow and in my joy : that we may also be partakers both of “the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings,” and of “the power of His Resurrection.”

My brethren, I have often spoken to you of the fleeting nature of all earthly hopes ; and I believed what I said, though I had no particular sorrow as a ground for that belief. But now I not only believe, but I see it. The vivid reality is before me : *I know that it is so*. And so it will be with you. And this makes me anxious to address you ; not from a want of feeling of my loss, but from the vivid consciousness of it—not from the absence of sorrow, but from the fulness and abundance of it ; for the heart must have vent in some way, or it would burst. Let us meet, then, in God’s house, and before God’s altar ; let the place where the Lord Jesus is, where the blessed and holy angels are, our fellow-servants who condescend to minister to us, where “the spirits of the just, made perfect” are, I doubt not, in thought, if not in act, where those who are departing long to be, that they may praise God in the Church once more ; in this house of the living God let us meet in sorrow and

in joy: and as you assure me by your sympathy that you "weep with them that weep," even so do I call on you to "rejoice with them that do rejoice." For joy and sorrow meet together in Christ our Saviour; sorrow at the departure, joy at the assurance of bliss; sorrow at the desolate estate, joy at the promised return. And there are others too who are joined with me in the same yoke of sorrow; for their sakes therefore I speak, that through my joy they also may be comforted.

The text I have chosen speaks of comfort. It is not the hard indifference of the worldly philosopher, neither is it the sullen despair of them that have no hope; but it is the language of hopeful, thankful, cheerful piety, such as it becomes us to adopt, when speaking of departed saints, or when thinking of our own departure. It gave comfort to her who is gone from us at the hour of her trial, and, therefore, it gives comfort to us. Let us then, by God's help, consider its clauses. "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

There is, first, a strong contrast intended between the dispensation of the Gospel, under which we live, and the dispensation of the Law, under which the Jews lived. The contrast is every way remarkable, and worthy of attention. That dispensation was called the *Law*: this, the *Gospel*. That was chiefly precept, this chiefly promise, for its precepts are inclosed in its promises. That told you what to do; this, how to do it. That threatened the disobedient; this rewards and blesses the obedient. That was ushered in with visible signs of God's wrath, instruments of terror, danger, and awe; a whole mountain on fire, shaking to its foundation; a whole people terrified and affrighted, a loud thunder-storm bursting over them, lightnings darting around them; angels standing as ministers of judgment; a voice more terrible than all, crying, Come and be judged. That was the Law.—This is ushered in with gentle strains of the heavenly choir, coming in the stillness of the night to quiet shepherds, breathing peace and good-will, and ascribing "Glory to God," and inviting them to come and seek a Saviour, a babe, and yet a God.

All the signs, and instruments, and effects of the two dispensations are different. In the Law, was visible wrath; in the Gospel, invisible grace. In the Law, the covenant of circum-

cision, a rite exclusive, and savouring of bondage ; in the Gospel, the two Sacraments, breathing liberty, emblems of peace and purity ; water to cleanse, wine to invigorate, sure witnesses, effectual signs, chosen means to convey the grace so signified. In the Law, was a mountain that might be touched ; in the Gospel, a mountain and a city far above, which cannot be touched, but which are as real and abiding as the other was transitory. In the Law, clouds, and darkness, and tempest ; in the Gospel, He who " comes in clouds " is the Saviour of men. In the Law, a voice of words, forbidding even a beast to approach ; in the Gospel, a voice crying, " Come unto Me, ye weary and heavy laden ; " come unto Me, ye sinful sons of men ; come unto Me, ye departing souls, " and I will give you rest ! " In the Law, angels are ministers of vengeance ; in the Gospel, ministers of salvation. In the Law, Christ appeared as God the Judge ; in the Gospel, as Jesus the Mediator. In the Law, is no promise of atonement ; in the Gospel, the blood of sprinkling. In the Law, no promise of a future life ; in the Gospel, " the spirits of just men made perfect " form part of our society, wait for us, call on us to follow them quickly, pray for our speedy consummation. What a mighty contrast is here ! What fear in

¹ Matt. xi. 28.

the one, what hope in the other! What terror in the Law! what joy in the Gospel! And yet that we may "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling," to those who reject this mercy a condemnation follows more awfully severe.

2. But you will observe, secondly, that this contrast is not only between things which once were, and things which shall be hereafter, but between things that once were, and things that are now, even now to be enjoyed by us. The Apostle is peculiarly nice and accurate in his choice of words, and therefore his words must be marked, or we shall miss his sense. He does not say, ye shall come, but ye are come, or have come, intimating a full certainty of present communion. The bliss of which he speaks is not a future bliss only, but a present bliss; not a communion at some distant time to be enjoyed, but at this very hour now enjoyed. The invisible world is not away from us; it is among us, and we among them. A little veil only hides what is real, actual, present. For what is there that is not here? "Mount Sion" is here, for that is the Church of which we are members. The "angels" are here, for the Apostle has assured us that they are now in the Church. The "first-born" are here, for our names are enrolled in theirs. The "spirits of the just" are here, for God keeps them with us in

the hollow of His hand. "Jesus the Mediator of the covenant" is here, for He has said, "Lo, I am with you alway."

What more is wanted to make us happy? What but faith is wanted;—faith, but as "a grain of mustard-seed;" faith, looking out for the promises, realizing what is unseen, to make us live as among those present inhabitants of that glorious world: and when we lie down at night, to think of the angels who are our watchers; and when we rise in the morning, think of the Sun of righteousness who is our light; and when we come to Church and receive the communion, think of the blessed spirits of the just, who once meekly but joyfully received it with us, and are still our fellow-worshippers; and when we see the sun setting, or the leaves falling, think of our own speedy following after them; and where we see the fresh burst and vivid hues of spring, think of that bright unfolding morn, when the dead in Christ shall all rise together, and springing upon their feet, which were turned towards the east, waiting for the morning of the Resurrection, they shall, as with one bound, mount up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall "be for ever with the Lord?"

But to explain yet further the expressive sentences of the Holy Apostle.

1.—“Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Sion was the mountain on which the temple was built, Jerusalem the city in which it was situated. These are opposed,—Sion to the burning mountain Sinai, on which the Law was given; and Jerusalem, the holy city, to the desert in which the Israelites encamped.

But I do not doubt that by these expressions is intended the Church of Christ, the whole congregation and fellowship of the faithful. For this is Mount Zion. And St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Galatians, uses the same language concerning the Church, and so explains this passage. For opposing Sinai and Jerusalem as the two covenants of the *Law* and the *Gospel*, he says, “But Jerusalem which is *above*,” or, as it is here, “the *heavenly* Jerusalem,” “is free,” not in bondage, “which is the mother of us all,” that is, by baptism, calling, and sanctification. This then is one great blessing we are called upon to realize, that we have been born into the Christian Church. Sion is our home, Jerusalem our mother, heaven our final habitation, paradise our intermediate resting-place, earth our place of brief sojourning and wandering, and the Church the common centre of union for us all. Those that are here, and those that are gone: those that were before the day of Christ,

and those who live after it : all who love God and obey Him, are members of this goodly company, this present and everlasting communion.

2.—“Ye are come unto an innumerable company of angels.” It is highly probable that the words “the general assembly,” also belong to these, so that the Apostle’s meaning is, “Ye are come to the innumerable company of angels in full assembly.” And how are we come to the angels? The angels, or sons of God, we are told, rejoiced when the world was made. Angels waited on good men, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Daniel, and others; our Lord Himself, as their head, is called the Jehovah-Angel. In Jacob’s dream, angels were seen ascending and descending, and bearing the requests of God’s children upwards, and bringing messages of love and mercy down. Our Lord seems to allude to the same fact, saying, “Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” And, as the Psalmist says, “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them² ;” so St. Paul, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation³ ?” The angels

² Psalm xxxiv. 7.

³ Heb. i. 14.

brought the good tidings to the world, an angel announced it to Mary, Joseph, Zacharias; angels ministered to our Lord in His fasting and temptation, in His agony, and at His death, burial, and resurrection. Angels (as St. Paul says) are with us in our churches, present in all our acts of worship; for as it would seem, he speaks of a token of subjection worn by women, because of (the presence of) "the angels⁴." Angels bear departed spirits, as soon as they depart out of this life, into paradise, to be with the Lord⁵, and perhaps those who watched over them in this life, and carried their souls up to Christ, may still be permitted to make themselves known to them, and (it is not impossible) to inform them of whatever is proper for them to know respecting our welfare and happiness. For evidently the parable of Dives and Lazarus supposes the same feelings of love towards brethren to exist in another state which did exist in this; and if, as our Lord intimates, they exist in the minds of those who are lost, how much more in those who are saved! At all events, we may comfort ourselves with the thought, that angels who watch over us do likewise present themselves to those who are gone, and so keep up the fellowship which still exists between

⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 10.⁵ Luke xvi. 22.

us. For our Lord tells us that "our angels behold the face of God," which those who are departed hence in the Lord do also behold. And we learn from St. Jude, that so tender is the care which angels take of us, that even the dear remains of the saints are the objects of their watching; for one of the highest angels contended with Satan about the body of Moses⁶. Angels then are our company, our friends, our associates, our examples: awful in their friendship, continually with us, though we see them not, and fighting for us against the devil and his angels.

Angels worship with us when we say, "Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name." Let the thought fill us ever with a holy mysterious awe, when we approach the holy table, and though our bodily eyes be not opened, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, yet may the eyes of our mind be enlightened to see those by faith who are, to ordinary observers, invisible, and to "rejoice in believing!"

3. "*To the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven.*" By this expression the Apostle has been understood to mean the Apostles and

⁶ Verse 9.

early Martyrs, who may properly be considered as the first-fruits of the resurrection. So that we "are come" even unto them. High as they stand in glory, objects of God's special grace and favour, even such as we may not only hope to be among them, but consider ourselves as by God's mercy enrolled in the same blessed list, and joining with them in the same communion.

4. "*And to God the Judge of all.*" To Him who is by the Gospel proclaimed to be the Judge, who will finally crown His faithful servants at the great day of account, and from whose hand each one shall receive the promised everlasting reward; even to Him "are ye come;" to Him may ye draw nigh, and commit your departing spirits into His hand as unto a merciful and faithful Creator, trusting that being washed in the blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, they shall be found well-pleasing in His sight.

5. "*And to the spirits of just men made perfect.*" This is indeed the most consoling truth of all to those who suffer from the loss, the bitter loss of departed friends. For the bitterest thing of all is separation from those we love; a separation which death tells us is irrevocable, and which seems in the grave to be eternal. Not so, however, the Apostle; for he here assures us from the mouth of God, that they are still with us, and

we with them: unseen indeed, not visible to the sight, not palpable to the hand, not the objects of mortal sense in any way, yet still in some sense present; we are still theirs, and they ours: no irrevocable bar separates us, only a veil, only a little cloud, only a passing hour, only "a little moment," and we are with them again. "For," says the Apostle, "*ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect.*"

Let us observe what the Apostle says of them; and then in what sense we have come, and are coming to them.

1. They are *spirits*: no longer cumbered with earthly clay, and earthly dross, and earthly fears, sorrows, anxieties, disappointments. All this feverish restless world is gone from them. Yet, as spirits, they have not lost their love for us, the graces with which God endowed them they retain: they love us in Christ and for Christ! O happy love! without impurity, without alloy, friendship unspotted, eternal, undecaying!

And as spirits they are not limited as we are; their mode of access to us may be quite unlike our own, who cannot move but in the body; they may be near to us, though millions of miles distant, and in all the great mysteries of our redemption they are united with us beyond all doubt.

2. They are spirits *made perfect* or *consum-*

mate. Not that they have yet received their crown, for that is reserved for the last day; not that they are yet in the highest state of perfection, for that will not take place till the reunion of soul and body; but that they are so far consummated, that their work and labour and toil are done: they have no more battles to fight, no more pains to undergo, only to wait a brief space for us, beholding the vision of God, in the clear light of their Saviour's countenance. To these happy expectant spirits we are come,—and this in four ways:—

1.—By our calling, adoption, and common redemption. They are redeemed from sin, so are we; they are ransomed by the precious blood of Christ, so are we; they are sons of God, heirs and joint heirs in Christ, so are we; they look for the hope of the resurrection, so do we: theirs is the calm, still waiting for that which they are not; ours is the earnest struggle to put off this body of corruption, of which they are now happily unclad.

2.—We are come to them likewise in all acts of solemn worship. The same new song is put into our mouths which they more cheerfully and gloriously sing: we, like them, pray to one Father, look for one Saviour, rejoice in one Comforter, and make our boast of the righteousness and salva-

tion of one common Head. Though they do not partake in the Sacraments by actual corporeal reception, they participate in the grace which those Sacraments convey: the baptismal union remains which linked us to them while on earth, and the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, spiritually enjoyed, are the saving health, the eternal nourishment of their souls. The very solemn strains of our earthly worship are the significant emblems chosen by the Holy Ghost to convey to us the notion of their more exalted adoration, whether it be by sounds of celestial music, or by such other modes and senses as disembodied spirits are capable of. O blessed spirits! we are with you whilst ye sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honour, and power, and blessing⁷!" Our hearts are with you, our desires are with you, our worship is with you, and your Saviour and Lord is with us. If no earthly trials can separate us from His love, what can separate us from you, or you from us? We rejoice to think that your love for us has not diminished aught by your removal from the body, that it has increased in purity, and augmented in fervour; our joy is that you still pray for the whole mystical body in paradise with more in-

⁷ Rev. v. 12.

tenseness than you did on earth; and we, as far as our frail sinful bodies will allow us, join our prayers to yours for the whole body of Christ, and above all for ourselves, that we may speedily follow after; that our work being done, and God's will done in us, we may leave the world and its restless cares behind, and join your peaceful, holy society^a.

3.—We are come to them almost in *time*. Time

^a "The Saints have communion with the Saints and Angels above. They pray in general for us. Rev. vi. 10. Minister to us, and rejoice at our good."—*Bishop Beveridge*, vol. vii. p. 116.

"I believe, O most holy Jesu, that Thy Saints here below have communion with Thy Saints above, they praying for us in heaven, we celebrating their memorials, rejoicing at their bliss, giving Thee thanks for their labours of love, and imitating their examples; for which all love, all glory be to Thee."—*Bishop Ken on the Creed*.

"Let no man think that because those blessed souls are out of sight, far distant in another world, and we are here toiling in a vale of tears, we have, therefore, lost all mutual regard to each other; as there is still and ever will be a secret but unfailing correspondence between heaven and earth. The present happiness of those heavenly citizens cannot have abated aught of their knowledge or their charity, but must needs have raised them to a higher pitch of both. They, therefore, cannot but, in a generality, retain the notice of the sad condition of us poor travellers here below, panting towards our rest together with them, and in common wish for the happy consummation of this our weary pilgrimage, in the fruition of their glory."—*Bishop Hall, Christ Mystical*.

passes slowly on amidst the agony of grief. Days seem like years, and moments seem like days; but still time is rolling on like a dark troubled sea, wave upon wave, wave upon wave, with increasing rapidity; and be our last end soon or late in life, it must be soon. "That which still letteth" is but a moment in the unbroken day of eternity, the Judge is at the door, the midnight cry is daily heard, the veil is pressing to be lifted up, the world fast hastening to its end, human life in all of us like a vesture folding up, like a troubled sleeper, painfully awaking, like the great flood of waters rushing on to its exit,—a little moment, and we are with them again.

4.—We are come to them, therefore, in desire, and hope, and anxious expectation. We would not wish them back again—we would not unrobe them of the wedding garment—we would not place before their eyes this restless, anxious, troubled world; but we would put on the same robe with them. We would pray that we may learn the spirit of the blessed Paul, "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you⁹." O that God would deepen, strengthen, purify this our desire, and make us all fit for His kingdom, and crown us with His glory!

⁹ Phil. i. 23, 24.

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The last of the sentences of the Apostle is, "and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant." This is indeed the highest hope of all: for on it all the rest depend. We are come to Him already, we are come to Him in His word, we are come to Him in His Sacraments, we are come to Him in His Church, we are come to Him by faith in His unchanging comfortable promise, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out¹." Our only hope of the bliss of paradise with the higher bliss of heaven, after the resurrection, consists in our being for ever with the Lord; doing His will, praising His name, enjoying His presence, contemplating the exhaustless wonders of His love. To Him we are come as the way, the truth, and the life; and "when He who is our life shall appear, then" we trust also to "appear with Him in glory²."

Here I might close, but my desire and prayer for you all will not allow me to send you away without a few words of earnest affectionate entreaty and exhortation on the subject before us.

When I came amongst you, my brethren, three years since, full of hope and comfort, I little thought in my blindness to the future what was preparing for me, and now that "such things have befallen me," let me speak especially to those who

¹ John vi. 37.

² Col. iii. 4.

heard me address them then, and have often done so since, yet have never profited by my ministry. If my unworthy voice have no power to reach your hearts, at least let another voice impress and affect you. Let a voice from the bed of sickness and of death, and from a tomb, alas ! so early prepared, remind you of your own latter end, remind you that a sick bed is the place rather to testify to the survivors of grace already ripening for a better world, than to begin the work of repentance and reformation. O then at last relent : spurn not your own salvation : reject not the entreaties of one who speaks to you amidst sorrow and anguish of heart, and would fain see in you some means of comfort and of joy !

For what can there be so sad as to think of souls under our ministry continuing in sin, with all the graces and privileges of the Gospel ? Living in darkness amidst noon-day light, choosing death when life is offered, rushing out of heavenly bliss into the miseries of eternal suffering, and, by their own obstinate unbelief, fitting themselves for destruction ! Think, O think of what you have neglected to do ! of your drowsy prayers, your indifference to the calls of God's providence, of your hearing to no profit, because you have prayed so little in the church, or out of the church ; think how often you have omitted to

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come and pray during the week, when you had leisure, and might have done it, and nothing but your self-will prevented you!

The only regret which our departed sister ever expressed to me, during her sickness, was the being deprived of the opportunity of attending God's house and the Communion. Let me beseech you to remember this: you who come only occasionally, or, through mere indolence, once a day, and seldom or never in the morning. To you too I speak, whose hearts are swallowed up with cares of this life, and the love of this evil world. This is sad work, sad preparation for death! What good will those cares do you then? What will be left but bitter unavailing regret that you had not sooner listened to me, and taken warning? To you likewise I address myself, who fail to attend the Holy Sacrament, or attend only once or twice a year. Why, my brethren, will you continue to neglect so holy, so comforting, so needful an ordinance? If you thought rightly of it, if you looked on it as the participation of your Saviour's body and blood, you would much sooner go without your meal all Sunday than neglect at any time to come. Will you feed the body and starve the soul? nourish the weak, decaying body, and let the soul perish for lack of spiritual sustenance? And to the young especially I would

speaking; or rather, it is not I that speak, but another. Youth is the time to dedicate to God the freshness, the vigour, the vivid impressions of early life. Those who serve Him in their youth, will find that, as they grow older, they will have a comfort and confidence in God which cannot otherwise be acquired. Abstaining from youthful sins is the way to make old age, if ever we reach it, cheerful to ourselves, and profitable to others. At all events, what so instructive and edifying, what so lovely and delightful, as the piety of the young? A special favour attends it; a special reward belongs to it. "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me." There is no gloom and bitterness in true religion: there is a cheerfulness, a comfort in it, which, while it is far from careless and riotous mirth, is equally far from sullen despondency and gloom. But you see the uncertainty even of *your* lives. A month or two of sickness is sufficient. Would it not be wise in you to listen to your pastor to-day, whose desire is to see you devote yourselves to God, and live to His glory, in peace and happiness?

Let me speak also to those who have been spared the severity of suffering. How thankful should you be, my brethren, for the gracious exemption! Your comfort is still whole within

you. Human life in your case has not yet lost its object. The accustomed smile still greets you on your return, tempering your joy, and sweetening care, and making your house still a home. Your present joy is unbroken, and you can dwell on the recollections of the past without the bitter consciousness of separation. The sorrows of your brethren may teach you how to prize those mercies, the real value of which, as they will tell you, they never knew until they lost them; and while you learn more duly to appreciate God's goodness to yourselves, you will with the more holy fear and caution possess every blessing which "droppeth upon you out of heaven," "as though you possessed not."

In short, I address you all as one whom I would fain hope God has placed here for some good to you, one who thankfully acknowledges all your kindness and all your sympathy, and beseech you for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to be more in earnest than you have been hitherto. Strive with more anxiety for an eternal crown. Seek to be more diligent in your callings, more faithful and upright in the discharge of the several duties of life, more patient amidst contradiction and suffering, more humble in your own opinion of yourselves, more meek and gentle towards all men, more united as Churchmen, more loving as bre-

thren, more ready to assist your pastor in works of charity, and especially now that the solace of his life is taken from him.

Arise, then, ere it be too late. Think of Christ's bitter sufferings for all your sins; think of His many calls, times without number, and your neglect of them. Think of the present call, yet louder than before, and you will not, surely you cannot, harden your heart in the day of visitation, and say, Lord, I will not "come unto Thee that I may have life."

And let us, who have turned to the Lord, and tried to serve and please Him, thank and bless His holy name, when He afflicts, chastises, and even scourges us for our good. Let us believe that so it is best: that severe pain is necessary for us: that too much comfort here might ruin us, and remember to whom it was said, "Thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things;" and so bless God for pain and trouble. Let us take up our Master's cross and bear it for His sake, with joy: counting it our highest honour to be called to suffer, and desiring earnestly to suffer according to the will of God. For every suffering will be over when sin shall be no more: when we shall find

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And earth exchanged for heaven."

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SERMON XXIX.

THE JOY OF SUFFERING.

1 PETER iv. 12, 13.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you : but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

THAT God's ways are not as our ways, and His thoughts as our thoughts, is a deep truth which we can never thoroughly understand in this imperfect state, and which we seem often to lose sight of till we find the will of God and our desires crossing each other. For God looks to eternity, and man to time ; God watches our eternal salvation, man has regard to his present visible comfort ; God orders our path and our ways according to His unerring view of what on the whole is best ; man, who cannot look beyond the present hour, and knows not what a day

may bring forth, boasts himself of to-morrow, before he knows what to-morrow may be. "For as high as the heaven is above the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts deeper than our thoughts." That it is so with His *power*, we must all acknowledge; but we are sometimes tempted to think that it is not so with His *love*. Let us reject the vain, selfish, foolish thought. As if the God who made us, the Saviour who redeemed us, the Sanctifier who comforts us, could love us less than we love ourselves, or so loving us, were not able to do more and better for us than we can desire or conceive!

The text I have chosen to-day seems framed to meet these wayward thoughts of poor frail, miserable man. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Here is an admission that it is natural to think any great and sore trial "strange," to judge it not only mysterious, but unusual and almost harsh, to compare it with our own modes of thinking and acting, and examine it by them; and no doubt it is natural so to do; but having for our comfort made the admission, that God might show us how truly He sympathises with us, He adds the remarkable exhortation, "But rejoice, inas-

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much as ye are made partakers of Christ's sufferings;" not only do not think it strange, but even rejoice. This seems almost impossible, but then to strengthen us, He sets before us the grounds of joy, which are great.

First, let these sufferings be what they will, if you suffer as a Christian, they are an evidence of your being one with Christ in the fellowship of His blessed, mystical body. Secondly, let them be as secure as they may, He shall come to put an end to them, His glory shall be revealed. Thirdly, what He shall then give you will put all sufferings out of mind, and leave no room for any thing but joy; for ye shall be "glad also with exceeding joy."

I am sure I need make no apology to those whom I now address, for speaking on a subject so congenial to my own feelings at this time. But, my brethren, in speaking from my own heart, I speak to the hearts of all those who are not very indifferent to the subject; for I can assure you that your own trials, though not present, are only deferred. Some of you who hear me have probably been already severely tried, and may be so again; and therefore you may now, from the experience of the afflicted, lay up a store of comfort for yourselves against the tempest comes.

I said just now that the Apostle admitted that it was natural to think *trial strange*. Our nature, indeed, shrinks from trial, and rebels against it; but when that trial is either unexpected, or comes after some promise of blessing, or seems the reward of service, or is compared with the prosperity of many who have no "fear of God before their eyes," and yet never seem to suffer at all, but go on through life full of ease, and wealth, and honour, and comfort, filled with the world and devoted to it,—then it does seem *strange* to us. For how speaks the Psalmist: "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence?" But what is his language at the end of the Psalm: "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of the Lord; then understood I their end." And how does he conclude? He was taught to find his all in God; he let earth go, that he might win his way to heaven: "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee¹."

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 13, 14, 16, 17, 25, 26.

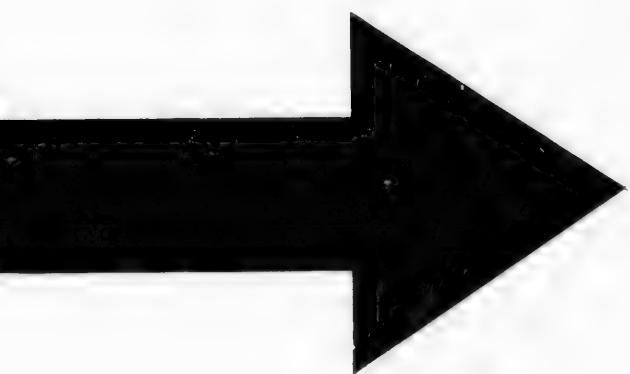
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Again, how speaks the prophet Habakkuk? "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear? even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save? Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance²?" Yet, how does he conclude? "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation³." Nay, we have a higher example to go to for this language. The eternal Son felt Himself, as a man, for a moment forsaken: "O My God, I cry in the day-time, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." Yet how does He teach us to conclude? "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him, but when he cried unto Him, He heard. My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear Him⁴."

Let us compare these sentences of the prophets with our Lord's own dealings with the Apostles. If there were any on whom Christ might be thought to have set His love above others, surely they were His own Apostles; those whom He had

² Hab. i. 2, 3.³ Hab. iii. 17, 18.⁴ Ps. xxii. 2. 24, 25.





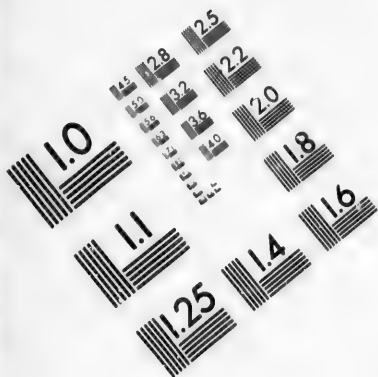
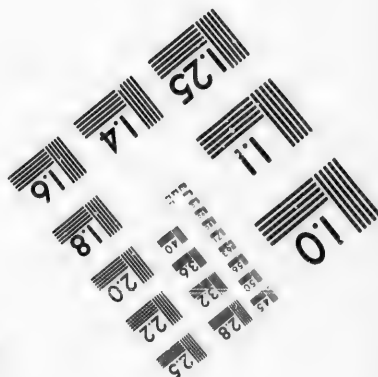
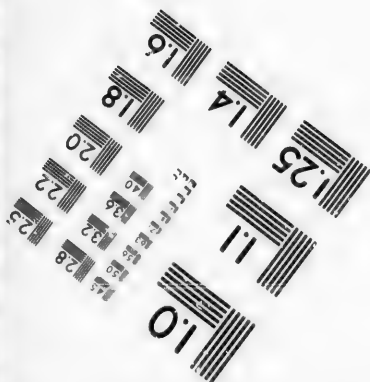
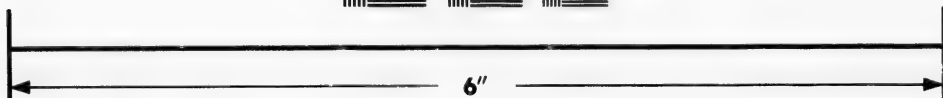
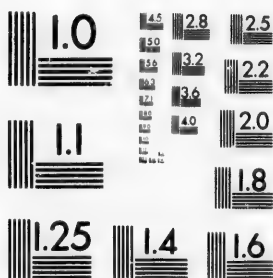


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Himself called, chosen, sent, and ordained ; those who had forsaken all to follow Him ; those who were His friends, His companions ; who had ate bread with Him, continued with Him in His temptations, had been present with Him at His miracles, in His journeys, on the holy mount of transfiguration, and who were His witnesses to the world of all that they had seen and heard. Yet how does He deal with them ? Were His ways as our ways ? were His thoughts as our thoughts ? Did He deal with them as a mother treats her much-loved child, indulging it in all its humours, feeding it with every dainty, seeking for it every worldly honour, praying that it may be spared every affliction ? Far otherwise. No sooner had He brought them to the full knowledge of Himself, and displayed all His tenderness and love for them, than He left them apparently alone, bereft of every solace, destitute of every comforter ; He never bestowed on them one worldly honour, He never vouchsafed them one piece of worldly fortune ; He gave them neither houses, nor lands, nor riches, nor ease, nor advancement, nor any thing to bind them to the world. He took it all away, and made them feel His love by His spiritual presence, His mystical fellowship ; by the progress of the Gospel ; by the comfort of the Spirit ; by the sympathy of the

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faithful; by the witness of the Holy Ghost in themselves; "by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as poor yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things." This was His (to human eyes) *strange* method of dealing with those He so tenderly loved. Ought it, then, to seem strange to us, if we are in any small measure dealt with in the same path of suffering? "Beloved, think it not strange."

There is another admission here, which is remarkable. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you." It is a fiery trial, and it is in or within you, so the word signifies, and its use is specified—for the trial. A trial by fire is of all trials the most severe. We know what happens to most things in nature when they are tried by fire; that they are thrown down, consumed, and brought to nothing. The most glorious works of man, erected with the utmost care and skill, and at vast expense, will seldom resist fire; and we have no words to express the durability of any thing greater than that it is *fire-proof*. And so in our own persons, fire is what does us most injury, and we shrink from it more than from almost any thing besides. Martyrdom by fire is thought to

be the most horrible of deaths. But here is fire spoken of, and trial by fire, and the thing certain, for we are not to think that any "strange, unusual thing happens to us," for we are appointed thereunto. But here is our comfort, that whereas ordinary fire consumes, this fire purifies; all that it consumes is our dross; all that it retains and purifies is our gold. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ⁵." These are the words of the same Apostle. And the prophet Malachi tells us, that Christ the Lord of the temple, that is, His Church, sits as a refiner and purifier of gold. Isaiah says, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction⁶." What a comfort it is, then, to be able by faith to know that our Lord thinks it worth while (so to speak) to purify and refine us!

We do not cast rubbish, stones, and dirt into the crucible, it is only gold and silver that is put there; and so if God tries us with fiery trials, it is an evident proof of His love, His watching over us with a master's eye, hoping that when He has

⁵ 1 Pet. i. 7.

⁶ Is. xlviii. 10.

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sufficiently proved us, we shall be fit for His use and His work. For man's greatest glory is to be made fit for the service of God, just as the greatest honour that can be put on gold and silver is to place it in the service of the sanctuary, or convert it to the use of Christ's poor. And, when we think how much alloy there is mixed with our best works, we may conceive how much purification is wanted to fit us for the service of the sanctuary, or the enjoyment of heaven.

An honour, indeed, and an advancement it is to be any how ~~so~~ fitted ; to be any way one with Him who is the great Author and end of all.

We have hitherto considered what the Apostle *grants* by way of concession and sympathy to *nature* ; let us now see what he *demand*s from grace. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Here is his demand from those who might think it strange to be tried with a fiery trial, "*Rejoice.*"

Here, indeed, the blessed Apostle carries us up to a height, which it seems impossible to reach ; and with man it is impossible. To bear with resignation and silent submission the deep strokes of an afflicting God, seems but the duty of one who feels himself a sinner ; but to rejoice, and that in a fiery trial, what a height is this ! Yet we have examples before us even here.

But I think they belong more to the New Testament than to the Old, where the doctrine of the resurrection was but imperfectly understood. For before Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, had appeared, submission was more natural than joy; but now Christ, by His death and passion and joyful rising again, having sweetened every cross, and eased every pain, and made every thing possible to us, and brought near to us the doctrine of our own resurrection, and taught us to think of His coming as near, and to expect it (so to speak) at every watch of the night, at every morning's dawn, we may rejoice even in affliction.

There is, indeed, if we come to think on it, something very mysterious in deep joy; we seldom rejoice without a secret trembling, or without tears being ready to flow. The mother's first thrill of joy on the sight of her first new-born infant, the sudden outburst of affliction on any good news being brought to us, the return of friends and kindred to each other's arms from a far distant land, that is, the purest and holiest earthly joys, are often scenes of joy and sorrow mingled together, we hardly know why; thus it is said of Joseph, "that he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck⁷." So that we need not wonder that some

⁷ Gen. xlv. 14.

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joy is mixed in our heaviest cup of sorrow, seeing that some sorrow seems strangely to blend with our highest heart's joy. But if we examine the grounds of that joy of which the Apostle speaks, we shall find them to be solid and durable; such as our Saviour felt, when He "rejoiced in spirit;" such as the wise men shared, when they saw the bright star of Bethlehem; such as was shed over the blessed Apostles, when they counted it all joy to be counted worthy to suffer for their Master's sake; such a joy as our Lord describes, when He says, "that they might have *My joy* fulfilled in themselves^s."

The first ground of the Apostle's exhortation to rejoice is, that by suffering, especially by severe suffering, we are partakers with Christ in His cup of woe. For that cup how bitter, how very bitter it was, how it forced the very blood from His heart upon His pores, how on the ground, on a cold night, He sweat that bloody sweat, He uttered that loud and piercing cry, we know; and yet we know it not, for none but He who felt it can tell what and how dreadful a suffering it was. Yet He mercifully accounts our suffering part of His own. Though He suffered, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," and we suffer, the

^s John xvii. 13.

unjust, for our departures from God, yet He puts our suffering in the same lot with His own; it is all one; He and His members are together joined in the fellowship of the Spirit, joined in the cup of sorrow, joined in the covenant of love, joined in the bonds of eternity, and neither pain, nor shame, nor death itself can separate them. Now here is a continual and a solid ground of joy. Here we may rejoice of a surety, let our sorrow be as bitter as it may; for the more bitter it is, if we bear it for His sake, the more are we partakers of Christ's cup; the more nearly does our sorrow approach to His; infinitely distant from it at the highest, both in amount and in merit, but still accounted as part of His by our oneness with Him, while His members here.

Here, then, is a Gethsemane where we may watch with Him our hour; here is a painful, blood-stained track, along which we may carry our cross after Jesus; here is the cross itself, erected full in sight, where the world may be "crucified to us, and we unto the world." Thus, as that blessed service for the Visitation of the Sick in our Prayer-book says, "truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ, and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ; for He Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; He entered not into glory before

He was crucified." And this is the Apostle's first ground of rejoicing.

But we may point out a second. "*When His glory shall be revealed.*" The cross is not the *end*, but the *way*; and though we may rejoice in the way, our chief joy is reserved for the end of our course. We live in hope, and "if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it¹." And you will observe how the Apostle connects a second ground of joy with the first. "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." For Christ suffered only for a little while; He soon shook off the fetters of death and the grave, and amidst joy and glory entered the eternal gates. And though our joy is not as immediate as His, for our bodies lie in the grave till the general Resurrection, yet a part of that joy is vouchsafed all who depart in the faith of the Lord Jesus; for the Apostle tells us that "they are with the Lord;" they see His glory, though they are not fully glorified themselves. But it is plain that the Apostle bids us here rejoice, because soon, very soon, His glory shall be revealed; the heavens shall open, the Son of man shall descend, the joyful summons shall

¹ Rom. viii. 25.

be heard, the welcome to the marriage feast, the return to our long-desired home. Then, "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy;" then, "he that now goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him²."

"When His glory shall be revealed." The revelation of Christ's glory is an expression often found in Holy Scripture, and there is much in it. For though on earth Christ was revealed, yet it was, as it were, in secret, to a few, in an obscure corner of the world, only to chosen witnesses, by degrees, and His power hid itself, as if afraid to break forth in a world so sinful and unable to contain it. And so it is now; the Gospel is hid from multitudes even in Christian countries, and from the heathen world almost entirely, and Christ's glory is little seen. But in that bright and joyful day, when all sin shall be gone, and all sorrow and sighing clean vanished away, and His people all brought together to meet Him in the air, and they shall be all righteous, then shall His glory be revealed; they shall see Him as He is, without fear and without shame, in the matchless brightness of His own glorious person.

"Then," says the Apostle, "ye shall be glad

² Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6.

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with exceeding joy;" exulting, leaping for joy, as it were, at one bound from earth to heaven; re-entering no more a diseased, languishing, decaying body, but one pure, immortal, and glorious! So that all the joy you now feel in suffering with Christ is only like a drop, compared with that sea of joy where you shall rejoice with Him. The worst things of Christ are indeed better than the best things of the world; His reproaches better than the treasures in Egypt; His stripes better than thousands of gold and silver; His cross better than their crown. What, then, must His joy and crown of rejoicing be!

We all know, that even here on earth no description is ever like the reality, when we come to see and enjoy it for ourselves; so that we can readily understand that the knowledge of suffering being all past, and of God's eternal kingdom being come, the meeting of all those who have shot that dreadful gulf of death, and felt the pangs of separation, the sight of all those glories, the possession of that rich inheritance, the fellowship of the blest, must be beyond what any words or thoughts of man can now express. Surely, then, this is enough to make any heart glad, and to raise us above any sorrow, however severe and searching the fiery trial may be.

Having thus then dwelt at some length on these

everlasting truths, which give comfort to my own soul, I will not conclude without addressing you on some points which are uppermost in my mind at the present moment. For I need not say, that I deeply feel that every affliction of mine is intended for you as well as myself. "Whether we be afflicted," says the Apostle, "it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and saivation³." The minister and his flock are bound up together by the ordinances of God. I hope I can truly say, that I know of no greater pleasure than to do you good, and that your welfare in all I think or do is uppermost in my mind. If this be not the case, indeed I have lived and laboured in vain. But you must recollect, on the other hand, that in every thing that befalls me you are concerned. Warnings to me, are warnings to you; bereavements of mine, are bereavements to you; hindrances and trials in the work, are hindrances also to you. And so on the use which you make of my trials, as well as your own, may depend somewhat of the usefulness of my ministry among you. Whether God may intend, by these repeated admonitions, to intimate

³ 2 Cor. i. 6.

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to me that my own course on earth may not be prolonged, I know not; but no doubt He intends that I should quicken my steps, and prepare to meet Him: and then I know that I must give an account of my ministry among you. I would affectionately then address you all, beseeching you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

Are there here any who suffer with me? I call on you to rejoice with me in sufferings. These trials are neither so many nor so severe as those before us have endured. The great fight of afflictions, the resisting unto blood, the perils of an Apostle, are not our portion. Let us be thankful for what remains; thankful for what we are spared, and thankful for the cup of Christ's sufferings which He puts into our hands. Let us not afflict ourselves with apprehensions of troubles yet to come, but know that His strength is "sufficient for us" in this our day, and believe that if we suffer, and watch and depend upon Him, He will bring us safely through all, though men should ride over our heads, and we should go through fire and through water.

There are some here, too, who I know rejoice in the services of the house of God; and think no time so well spent, no hours so delightful, as those they spend in the sanctuary of God. You are never absent, but from sickness, when the church

bell calls to prayer; you think communion with your Saviour to be a more blessed feast than all the world's rich dainties; you know you cannot enjoy His presence too often, nor be found too frequently confessing your sins, imploring His grace, breaking bread in His house, and communicating with Him at His table. The frequency of such returns kindles your zeal afresh, and like the Psalmist of old, you sing, "O when wilt Thou come unto Me⁴?" "For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand⁵." Unlike those lukewarm guests invited, but each finding his separate excuse, uniting only in rejection of the offer, your heart says, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Brought up by God's grace in the communion of His Church, you desire no other. Having seen the use, beauty, and value of the Prayer-book, you use it, and you love it; you know it to be scriptural, and you find it to be good for your soul; and you use it all, not wishing to go beyond it into superstition, nor to stop short of it in indifference. Trials, my brethren, only strengthen the conviction which I feel that you are right. The principles I have taught you are not meant for political ends, or party purposes, or to bask in the sunshine of religion; I

⁴ Ps. ci. 2.⁵ Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

find them useful to my own soul in the depth of sorrow, and the severity of affliction. And I call then on lukewarm, inconsistent Churchmen, not indeed to unite with me in reviling, railing, or bitterness—far be it from us all—but in conscientious and thankful obedience to the Prayer-book, as the best comfort in affliction next to the Bible. Where will you find any prayers which breathe the very spirit of Holy Scripture more than these which you profess to use? I entreat you to think also, whether you can fairly justify yourselves in neglecting, some of you the prayers, and some the Sacraments of the Gospel? If you look to the Bible examples, they are all against you; if you look to the Bible commands, they are all against you. Remember what our Lord says of lukewarm Christians; “So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth⁶.” I know all the excuses that are, or can be made, for neglecting the Communion, and I know that they are all hollow, and that none of them will stand. What, are we to neglect God’s positive command, because some may come in superstition, or others in hypocrisy? Alas! can we for one moment dream that such an excuse will be accepted? or think ourselves in a

⁶ Rev. iii. 16.

fit state to die, when we acknowledge ourselves unfit to be present with the Lord? And if unfit to die, why do we live any longer as we are, when the means are put into our hands? "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise'." I beseech, I implore you, not to reject entreaties offered, as it were, fresh from the bed of death, and advice, the soundness of which is tested by the fire of affliction. I beseech you recollect what a mistake is for eternity, and how near you may be to it. Think of the day when you must meet your Lord in the air, and give account to Him who reads the heart. Remember, too, how your own necessary businesses, and provision for your families, swallows up the greater part of your time, and leaves you little absolutely at your disposal. Surely, then, the one talent that remains you should not hide, the little fleeting fragment of life you should not waste. Think of eternity, and be wise in time.

And once more, let me speak to the young, though but a few words. I, too, like yourselves, had reckoned on youth and health and strength; I saw them usefully employed, and rejoiced in them; but you see there is no security for your

own possession of them for one single day. Had I possessed an undutiful or thoughtless child, I could not have had the comfort which I bless God I now have even in the loss of them. I would entreat you first, then, to remember the shortness of your own lives, the necessity of diligence, patience, honesty, and truth; the dreadful sin of irreverence in the house of God, of lying, swearing, backbiting, and all deception; and of that unruliness, high-mindedness, which is a snare to youth. I can tell you from experience that religion is no bar to cheerfulness, to innocent mirth, and yet is the only safe-guard against evil. Let this day be a day of remembrance to you. Never neglect your daily prayers to God. I will say no more to you but this, that God has said, "I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me early shall find Me^s." And now I commend the discourse to Him who alone can bless what I have said to your good, and on whose mercy only I depend for a passage through a world of sin and sorrow, into that kingdom where all that are sick shall be made whole, and whatsoever is wanting shall be perfected.

^s Prov. viii. 17.

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